

2011 Eckhart Tolle Creating A New Earth Audiobook

[Speaker 1] (0:15 - 12:02)

We need to understand a few basic things about this, and I'd like to remind you of something that's already been written in *The Power of Now*, and that is that your life consists of, what you call your life, is usually your life situation. Your life consists of your life situation, which is your job, your financial situation, your relationships, your living situation, your health situation, whether you're young or old, or whatever is happening in your life, all that makes up your life situation. And for most people, that's all there is.

They don't know anything else. Their whole life consists, what they call my life, when they refer to my life, they're talking about their life situation. And in *The Power of Now*, I differentiate between your life situation, which is one level, and a more fundamental level that I call your life.

We are going to talk about these two levels today, at a time when, for many people, their life situation is becoming challenging. They're encountering new limitations suddenly coming into their life situation. The only difference between our present situation in the world, and what normally happens, is that many people experience similar things at the same time.

So many people at the present time experience some form of challenge or limitation coming into their life, as many of the structures, the external structures in the world, are becoming shaky, and some have collapsed already. As you may remember from *A New Earth*, I speak about the collapse of Soviet communism, which nobody could have predicted, and I speak of the impending collapse of many of the structures that are ego-based, that are an external reflection of an inner state of consciousness, that is the ego. And those structures, which of course includes financial structures and so on, are now beginning to collapse, and something totally new will arise.

How long this collapse will take, I cannot say. But everybody can clearly see, and even the experts are talking about a systemic, I hear this word on the radio, a systemic crisis, or something like that. In other words, the crisis is not to do with this or that on the surface of things, but concerns the very structure of these organizations, in the same sense that the human mind, the problems of the human mind, have not to do with content of whatever is the content of your mind, but the very structure of the mind, the human mind, that needs to change.

So for many people, limitation in one form or another is coming into their life situation. And that is actually not what the media wants us to believe, that these things are dreadful. The challenge that many people are encountering at this time is actually that which will push them into a new state of consciousness.

That is the possibility, that is the promise. Whenever you encounter a crisis situation, whether it's personal or collective, there is the opening into a new way of being, the possibility. It doesn't mean that everybody will embrace that possibility.

So we need to first of all see, not believe what we are told in the media, that we should be in a state of fear, that the only response, the only natural response to what's happening is a state of fear. That is an unconscious response. We need to see that change is absolutely necessary in this world, and the dissolution of many of the ego-based structures is absolutely necessary for the planet to survive, and for humanity to survive.

So what's happening is not dreadfully bad. What's happening needs to happen. The totality, the intelligence behind phenomena is doing it.

So it is a good thing, and if challenges come into your life, which might mean limitation, financial limitation, you may have to move somewhere else, you may have to downgrade, uncertainty may come into your life. Oh, that shouldn't be happening. I should know what's going to happen for the next 20, 30 years of my life.

Well, you don't know anymore. And that is wonderful that there is suddenly an opening into uncertainty. So is it possible for you to embrace uncertainty, and not demand that you should know what's going to happen to you in your life situation, to embrace not knowing, to embrace uncertainty, and to embrace, yes, there are difficulties, there are challenging situations, but that is part of being here on this planet in this form.

I'd like to remind you of a book called *The Road Less Traveled*, and I never got to read the whole book. I basically got stuck on the first two sentences of the book, and those first two sentences of the book were so good that you didn't need to read anymore. I don't know whether that's a good thing for an author to write such a good book, that all you need is the first two sentences.

And if you don't get that, you can still read the rest of the book, but if you get that... So the first sentence is, life is difficult. Okay?

And the second sentence, I don't know literally, but it says something like, and if you know that life is difficult, and you accept that life is difficult, it's no longer difficult. It's only, it's difficult when, if you say it shouldn't be. But if you go with, yes, the uncertainty, this is part of being here in this form, there is continuous uncertainty, and the certainty, the rigidity of things is an illusion.

The certainty that all these structures are solid, and you can sometimes see it, that the world trade center looked very solid, and gone. And all the structures, the big banks, they looked so solid, nothing could possibly happen there, forever. And within a few weeks, they're beginning to crumble.

Soviet Communism, nothing looked more solid than Soviet Communism. You say, this is so rigid, it can't possibly, must at least survive for another thousand years. The rigidity of it, and the people who embodied that, it's not going to move.

When you saw the Soviet rule, greeting the military parades, huge, huge tanks and rockets going past, nothing can be more solid than that. And within a year, collapsed. The whole thing collapsed.

Now, one good thing, of course, about traveling to India is that the external reality is a little bit less solid than in the West. So you're less likely to delude yourself that you live in a solid reality that can be controlled, or that you can be in control of. There you see the structures are actually a bit shaky everywhere.

And even if you go into a luxury hotel, you never know what's going to happen. So we are learning to go with the flow of things, as the expression goes. And the flow of things is fluid.

It's not a continuous change, something new is arising. And why demand that you should, there should be certainty in your life. Be open to uncertainty and see how empowering that actually is.

And not say, okay, but what about my pension plan? What's the mutual funds? I had saved all my life and now, look, I got the statements, I lost 50% of it.

Yes, so, but you're still here. That's your life situation. Whatever happens, your life situation.

And you may remember a year ago, you were looking at your mutual funds and said, wow, it's made so much money. It's great. It feels good.

[Speaker 3] (12:02 - 12:04)

And then you look at it again.

[Speaker 1] (12:05 - 25:28)

Okay, now I can relax now. And then you relax and then the next one comes and says, oh my God, life is difficult. Things are dissolving.

And see, if you resist internally what is happening, as the media teaches you to do, then of course, you resist the flow. You resist the arising of the new, the arising of the new state of consciousness primarily in you, and eventually the arising of new external expressions of that state of consciousness, a new world. We don't need to be concerned about that.

That comes of itself. What we need to be concerned about is to be open to this

transformation, to be open to not knowing. So there's our life situation.

And it's interesting. There may be interesting changes happening in our life situation. And we say, it's fine.

Whatever change comes, you look at the situation and see, yes, all of a sudden a limitation is coming into my life. I lost my job and my investments are not worth that much anymore. Okay, then how can you overcome these limitations?

Limitations can be overcome always on two levels. There is the external limitations. Limitations can be overcome on an external level.

And other limitations can only be overcome on an inner level. So you need to see whatever situation you encounter in your life, is there anything I can do to overcome these limitations? It might involve moving somewhere else where you don't have a huge mortgage anymore.

It might involve moving to a different location. It might involve finding a different job or thinking outside of the box and doing something totally different you'd never even thought of, of thinking creatively. So whatever limitation you encounter in your life, you look at first of all at the externals of the situation.

Is there anything I can do? And then you become still. And then you start thinking again.

And you look at the situation. What are the possibilities? Then you become still again.

Then you look again. You think or you talk to someone. And then you go back into stillness.

And that process may take a while, not necessarily just a day, of looking what it is, what is it that I can do, and going within where you're not looking for anything, but become comfortable with what is here and now. And when you become comfortable with what is here and now, you're stepping out of your life situation into life. Life is now.

Life has nothing to do with what's going on in your life. It has nothing to do with past and future, or what your relationships are, or what your financial situation is, or your living situation is, or even your health situation is. That's all your life situation.

That is not life. Your life situation exists in time, past and future. Life is now.

So it is vital that you learn to step out of your life situation periodically so that your life situation does not absorb your entire attention continuously, because if it does, it'll drain you and eat you up, because you'll have continuous stuff to think about, one problem after another in my life, my life situation. Do you think, oh now I have to, what about that problem and that? And you're thinking about your, there's a continuous succession of problems that I need to worry about, and if I don't worry about it, it's all going to collapse

totally, even worse than it has done so already.

I need to be responsible and worry. You're being eaten up by your life situation. Your mind, it comes down to your mind, because your mind gives power to your life situation.

The continuous involuntary mind activity really is your life situation. If you don't think about your life situation, there is no life situation. What situation?

You come into, you step out of that periodically, vital to learn that, and come into life, and then the mind says, what do you mean by life? Okay, let's see where that is, that life. You step out of time, your attention, you remove your attention from past and future, okay?

How do you do that? Well, a little help would be, what about now? What's wrong with now?

Do I have a problem now? Now? Of course I have a problem now.

Look at my bank statement. Of course I have a problem now. I need to move by the end of the month.

I got no, I'm not talking about the end of the month, or what's going to happen to your mutual funds. I'm talking about, do you have a problem now? No.

I can't see any. I'm trying hard to find a problem in this moment. Well, there's a stain.

No, there isn't. I'm just saying, there's a stain here. Is that a problem?

No, it's a stain. Okay. I have a backache.

I don't. It's just an example. I have a backache.

Is that a problem? Only if you start thinking about it and saying, am I going to have to live with that for the rest of my life? Or, why do I always have a backache?

I wonder what's wrong with me. No, it's not a problem. It's a backache.

It's just that. You stay with what is now. Don't spin some stories about what is now.

Don't judge it, compare it, say it shouldn't be. You come into now. So, the first level of now is whatever is around you.

That's only level one. Level one of now is your sense perceptions. Wow.

And that's already a revelation. When you step out of being totally possessed, eaten up, eaten alive by your life situation, and you step out of that into just, even just becoming aware of sense perceptions, you're entering the now, because you can only perceive

now. And you're not perceiving any problem.

You're perceiving what is now. Sense perceptions, this room, the people, the incredible variety of human forms. Amazing to see.

Every human form is different and unique in some way. It's beautiful. You can sit in a public place and be in the now and watch people.

Nothing to do with your life situation. You're there as a presence, watching, perceiving this moment, the incredible fullness of this moment around you in the form of life forms, human life forms, animal life forms, plant life forms, the air, the incredible forms and shapes that are continuously moving, the spectacle of phenomena, unbelievable variety. It's fantastic.

And you have no idea that this is going on around you when you're totally trapped in your life situation, which really is your mind. So we are learning periodically to step out of that level that I call life situation and enter life. Life is now.

This was level one of what is around you. Be alert to that. Because otherwise you miss the whole thing because you're so concerned about your conceptual reality, which really is what a life situation is.

You're so concerned about your conceptual reality that you miss reality. Your conceptual reality eats up your entire attention continuously, and you're worrying about your life, which in reality is your life situation, but you call it your life. It's not life at all.

And so this is a dreadful fate for a person to be consumed by their life situation. And so they miss the life. They're trying to find the life, the fullness of life in their life situation.

And they're hoping that if they can eventually sort out their life situation so that they can find life. But if your life situation is all you have, you're never going to find life because your life situation is a set of thoughts and concepts in your head. So to become empowered, you need to rise.

One could say you rise above your life situation, which doesn't mean you don't deal with things anymore. You still deal with things, but you realize there is a level or a dimension to you that is far more powerful and vital than whatever is happening in your life. So accessing that dimension is vital, and that really is what spirituality is all about, not having some weird ideas about this or that or beliefs.

It's nothing to do with ideas. It's nothing to do with concepts. There's no such thing as spiritual concepts.

Concepts are not spiritual. They're not even spiritual thoughts. There's no such thing as a spiritual thought.

A thought is not spiritual because thought is form. Spiritual is the formless dimension in yourself. Level one, then, whatever surrounds you.

You can say, yeah, but this is still form too. Yes, it's form too, but it's not a mind form. It's not a conceptual form.

It's what is here in the world of physical forms. Be open to that. Level one of the now.

Level two of the now, don't get attached to the numbers. I'm just saying two. Level two of the now is feeling that you're alive.

Level two is, so your attention was on what is around you. The world is multifaceted. There's incredible play of phenomena all around you, and you acknowledge that, and it's beautiful.

It is nothing to do with what your relationships are doing at the moment or what your bank statements are doing at the moment or whether you have a job or you don't have a job or whether your wife has just left you or the husband has done this or whether you're... nothing to do with any of that. You're stepping out into presence.

Level two of presence is to feel that you're alive inside. You've already noticed that the world around you is alive. Well, that's a big step forward.

You have noticed that the world around you is vitally alive. So to notice that, you need to have stepped out of your life situation, your conceptual reality.

[Speaker 4] (25:29 - 25:29)

Wow.

[Speaker 1] (25:31 - 4:14:15)

Okay, that was... It's beautiful, the play of forms. And then you feel that you inside are alive.

Your body is alive. You feel the aliveness in your hands, your arms, your legs, and the totality of aliveness, the global aliveness inside in the background. And you can still look around and see the incredible aliveness around you.

Now, if you feel the body inside, you're already moving to an even more vital dimension than the vitality of life forms. There's your body. It feels good to be embodied, to sense the aliveness even in an everyday situation.

When things are going... Listen to the news and say something dreadful has just happened. There will be negative growth next year in the economy.

Negative growth. What does that mean? We are now officially in a recession.

Oh, my God. We are going to buy less at Christmas this... Oh, no.

We are not going to run around like mad rabbits this Christmas. Oh, that's dreadful. So even when you listen to the news, I'm exaggerating a little, but there's some truth in it.

Even when you listen to the news, you can feel the aliveness within while they're saying, we are now officially in a recession. The entire automobile industry of the United States may collapse and drag everybody else down. And you feel the aliveness inside.

So there you have something more vital than that. And if you are part of the automobile industry of the United States, and if it affects you directly or indirectly, when the situation arises externally, then you will deal with it. You will address it now.

And you accept whatever is and you look at it, okay, what is it that I can do? And then you go into life. And then you go out again and look at your situation.

Find the balance between dealing with your life situation and entering life. So level two said the aliveness in the body while you listen to the news, for example, or while the phone rings and somebody says, oh, dear, we need to do something. Well, if anybody comes to you and says, we need to do something, you step out of the life situation and become present, where there are no problems.

So you can hang on to your inner body. And then an even deeper level of your life situation, which of course, they're all connected, they're ultimately all one. At the deepest level, the one that contains it all is the realization that underneath it all, who you are is not the thoughts that go through your head, or whatever's happening externally.

But you can actually sense within yourself that you are that in which all the phenomena appear. That's the deepest level of life. Life is the consciousness that you are.

The I, the I am. You attach nothing else to I am. I am is the deepest who you are in your innermost identity.

That is consciousness. It is formless. It is the light in which everything appears.

And to feel yourself, even at this moment, to feel that nothing that can be defined is who you are. Nothing that can be thought is who you are. Nothing that happens around you has anything ultimately to do with who you are in your essence.

Success or failure ultimately has nothing to do with who you are. Success cannot give you your reality. Failure, success, is not who you are.

It's all the play of forms. It's all to do with time. It's your life situation.

Stepping out, out of that, into the power and the fullness of the present moment where

you know yourself as consciousness itself. Another word you could use as a pointer is to realize the stillness within yourself. Consciousness is still, alive, vibrant, but still.

Underneath all the things that are happening externally and internally in your mind and your emotional field, you remain as that. And that can be in any situation. When you are the Master, the spiritual Master knows him or herself as consciousness in any external situation, you can actually sense a spaciousness inside you, no matter what's happening.

And even while you're thinking, or you're going to think much less, because there's no reason to think totally unnecessary things all the time, to sense always in the background the I am, the stillness. That which is precious, something very precious, indestructible. And sometimes you may need to encounter a life-threatening challenge that suddenly comes in to sense that.

But whenever a form in your life begins to dissolve or collapse, there's a greater chance to discover within yourself that which is beyond form. So let's say the entire stock market collapses, and then you get your statement and it says zero. That moment of looking at your balance, and you say your mutual funds have gone from \$500,000 to \$5.

So this form that was important to you has dissolved. And you look at that, and instead of resisting, because this is what is, ultimately it's only a figure on a piece of paper. Only when you start thinking does it become a big problem.

But the reality of it is, you're opening this thing, you're taking it out of the envelope, and you're reading, and there is little scribbles, computer printout, which has a little figure on it. And that's all it is in the reality of the present moment. Unless you make a problem out of it and start thinking what's going to happen to me in the future.

How am I going to survive in my old age? I've worked for nothing, 30 years of work for nothing. What does all that mean?

It means it's a story around the simplicity of a figure on a piece of paper. And then once you are trapped in that, you're lost. So to see very clearly, this is the master, you're becoming a master when you just see the simplicity of any moment without going into spinning stories around me, my past, my future.

It was all in vain, I failed, it's all been pointless, I'm never going to make money again. All mind stories, mind created stories. So the solution to your financial or other problems is stepping out as much as you can into the aliveness of the present moment, which is who you are in your essence.

You are the now in which everything happens, the consciousness in which everything unfolds, the timeless space. And then look at the situation. So you're coming from a, you're rooted in a deeper place.

And then you're dealing with the externals. But always be very careful because the externals have a pulling power. And you're living in a world that's totally hypnotized by the externals.

And in a world that continuously tells you how important the external is. And every time you listen to somebody say, this is so important, you should be worried, you should be in fear, you should think about this, let's discuss it. And the world has this pulling power.

So you need to realize everybody's hypnotized into believing that this is all that there is. And this is absolutely serious and important. It is important perhaps, but it is only relatively important.

It is not of absolute importance. Of absolute importance is finding the essence of who you are. And then deal with things from there.

So that a different energy flows into, even into what you do. So the two are not separate. Even your so-called life situation changes is affected by the power of life itself when you are aware of that in yourself.

So a different level of consciousness flows into what you do. A different energy flows into what you do. When you realize that whatever you do is at best only relatively important.

Whatever happens is relative. Only one thing is absolute, and that is finding life, or as Jesus calls it, the fullness of life, which has nothing to do with your life situation. And the strange thing is, the life situation tends to unfold with greater ease when you are connected with something that dimension that is deeper than life situations.

And then even on the external level of your life situation, things happen more lightly, more easily. And that's the beauty of it. And this is the practice then.

And no better opportunity than the present time when you are being challenged rather than being deluded for a few more years that all is well, when it isn't, because eventually things are going to dissolve around you anyway. And if they dissolve, don't dissolve around you, then you dissolve before they do. So it's better to see that fact then wait until you're 92 years old, you may not be that alert anymore, to find the reality of who you are and the reality underneath phenomena.

So here's the mastery of life is to live in two dimensions simultaneously and then see what happens. You're practicing then every moment and whatever situation that arises in your life becomes a practice for staying present within that situation to feel the depths of who you are, the power of now, the power of consciousness as you deal with things. So this is what it means to become empowered.

That's what everybody wants, but they're looking for it where they can't find it. They are looking for some power in their external life situation. The power must come from within.

It does not come from your thoughts or from whatever happens out here. So another way of putting this is look at whatever limitations arise in your life. Let's say you're trapped somewhere in some unpleasant situation or place and you want to get out.

Look at the situation. What is it that I can do? Or perhaps there's nothing you can do for right now.

It's another, it's a beautiful thing to see at this present moment there's nothing I can do. I can't even pick up the phone. It's Sunday today.

I can't call anybody. Nobody's at work. There's nothing I can do except be with what is.

Stay. The next day, action arises. Not losing yourself in the action, another important thing, because it's very easy once you start to speak and to act, you totally lose yourself in that.

You will get stressed. The slightest stress means you've lost yourself in your life situation again. It is possible to deal with things effectively without stress.

Just be more powerful than the situation. For most people, the situation is always more powerful than they, so they feel smaller than the situation. That's normal.

And that's a delusion, because it all arises from consciousness. So you are actually far more powerful. The power of who you are is far greater than anything external, but that's, people don't know that.

So they're always reacting to something, defending themselves against this or that, realizing that the situation actually has very little power. And if your change of, your state of consciousness changes, external reality reflects the change. This does not mean that anything remains absolutely solid in external reality.

It still is subject to continuous fluctuations, so you don't attach yourself to anything. But it's beautiful to see that external reality reflects basically your predominant inner state. If your inner state is empowered, and it can only be empowered when you are not lost in your life situation, then the empowerment is reflected around you.

And it may come in many forms. It may come as financial abundance. It may come as anything, any form that the aliveness can take.

So it's an incredible thing to discover that you are actually more powerful than the world around you. Not in the narrow, egoic sense that you say, I can control everything that happens. No.

So this is a wonderful opportunity now to experiment with consciousness, with your life situation and your life, to find where is the life at this moment? Do you feel the aliveness of this moment? And then the universe uses you because it is going somewhere.

There's an evolutionary impulse at work on this planet and everywhere else, because if it's happening here, it's happening everywhere, as above, so below. Then the consciousness that wants to come into this world can freely flow through you and express itself. How?

In many different ways, according to your particular form. It might be some enlightened business. It may be that you're producing something that affects many people and brings that consciousness to others through some artistic creation or this or that, innumerable possibilities, how you can be an opening for the evolutionary impulse of the universe that wants to come through.

And then wherever you go, people will be affected by this transformed energy. You cannot not affect the world. When you live in the new state of consciousness, whoever you come into contact with is affected by that.

Even if you were a hermit, you would still affect the collective consciousness. If you are a frequency holder, as I call it in a new earth, a frequency holder is somebody who is not very interested in going out into the world and changing the world or building up some huge, great organization to make the world a better place or to create a great work of art or to come up with some new discovery or write a great book. Not that there's anything wrong with these things.

For some people, that is their life purpose. But there are some other people who are not drawn to that, who are content with remaining in a relatively small circle of influence. Contemplatives is the old word for those people, people who don't want to go out there and change the world.

They just want to be present. And that's fine because they hold the frequency of that state of consciousness. Because whatever state of consciousness you are in affects the totality of consciousness, is part of the totality of consciousness.

So I was a frequency holder for a large part of my life, never very interested in going out into the world and achieving the great things. I was kind of happy being withdrawn until something came into my life and I felt there's more that I can do. That was a thought that came.

I was doing little work, workshops with people, 10 people at a time, 15 people for a number of years, giving talks in people's living rooms. And then it was fine. In many ways, I felt happy being a semi-hermit and occasionally going out and doing little things.

Happy not being famous. I never thought I would want to be famous. But then the thought came, I could do so much more in this world, but it doesn't seem to be happening.

And one day I sat under an oak tree. You could call this, a question, later on we'll have

some questions. Somebody's asking a question about divine discontent.

The question is, do you ever experience what might be called divine discontent? That is, a discontent that leads to something very positive. And you could say that there was a moment that came at that time when I experienced a mild form of divine discontent, which simply is a sense of, there's more than I can do, that I could do, but it's not happening.

That's a mild form of divine discontent. It's not some unhappiness that says, oh, I have failed, I'm in my forties and what have I achieved? That's not divine discontent.

That's just a form of normal unhappiness. With divine discontent, there is not a lot of mind activity around me and my life. There's just a sense of, my present life situation has these limitations around me, but I could go beyond that.

I could be much vaster. The world needs what I know comes through me. I know that the world needs that.

So why isn't the world, I'm speaking for some of you too, why isn't the world opening up these channels for me? So that was the divine discontent. So I sat under an oak tree in Somerset, where I would sometimes go, magnificent oak tree.

And I said to the universe, which ultimately to myself, please use me. I was talking to myself ultimately, because I am that. Please use me.

I'm here. So I was a frequency holder. And yet after many years of a frequency holder, I had this sense of, okay, now expansion is what is called for in this world, a moment of divine discontent.

Please use me. I didn't hear any answer. And then I said something that some years later, I almost said, maybe I said too much.

I said, I want acceleration. Okay. And then I went home and nothing happened for a few months.

I didn't know that while nothing was happening for a few months, in my little cottage in Somerset, the countdown has already started, like the rocket ship, which goes 10, 9, 8, 7, 6. And then one day I woke up and said, I have to move. I have to move to the West Coast of North America.

And that was the beginning. And so the rocket ship had taken off suddenly. And finally I landed at the desk of Oprah a few years later.

I never wanted that much. It's too much. And then the lesson was to surrender to that.

It wasn't too much. It was what was needed. If I had been stuck to some previous idea

that I had about how my life should unfold, then I would be saying, oh, I'm overwhelmed.

It's too much. Well, this is surrender now to what is now, surrender to this enormous energy stream that's coming through. You asked for it.

You said acceleration. And there it is. And continuously, even in this, my life, many people believe my life situation must be wonderful.

In many ways it is. But no life situation is totally satisfying. And there are always things that happen and change.

There's no ultimate certainty in any life situation. You cannot derive long-lasting satisfaction from any life situation, even if you become famous. I can tell you that now.

The life situation has not the power to satisfy you for long. The satisfaction needs to be found in life. And life is now.

And if you find that, then your life situation is fine. It unfolds and becomes empowered, probably. So don't expect that your life situation does not have the power to make you fulfilled.

And it does ultimately not have the power to make you feel unfulfilled. You have to go deeper where you are, bigger than that. Although there was this divine discontent for a little moment, I'm certainly not happier or more fulfilled now than I was when I, as one magazine said, Eckhart Tolle suddenly emerged from complete obscurity.

So when I lived in complete obscurity, I didn't know I was in complete obscurity, but I was not less happy than I am now. The state is the same. So there's no sense it is fulfilling to see that consciousness is evolving through this form, yes.

But there's no increased happiness through that. The happiness was already there, basically. Because I was deeply rooted, as I still am, in life.

Life is always more vital to me than the life situation. I've always going, even now, I'm always a little bit out of balance. Even now, although great things are happening, but I'm not recommending that to anybody, I'm just saying, I'm a little bit out of balance, because I'm always more vitally drawn to the present moment and the aliveness of that than whatever I have to deal with on an external level.

So I'm always going a little bit too much, sometimes it's a little bit chaotic around me, because I don't deal with everything. If I dealt with everything, I would lose, I would become stressed, it's just too much. So many things, just put aside, and then after a few months, they are not a problem anymore, because the situation has changed.

And I don't do anything when I feel I'm not enjoying it anymore. Stop. What's the point?

What is the point in doing something that you cannot enjoy? But don't prematurely say, okay, I definitely can't enjoy this. See if you can connect with the power of now, and then do whatever you do.

So don't immediately say, well, what I'm doing, definitely I could never enjoy. Maybe, maybe not. Just try connecting, stepping out of the situation into the power of now, and then do.

Perhaps you can enjoy it. And if you still can't, then go and do something else. But no compromise, don't live with unhappiness, or with continuous stress, or frustration.

That is a dreadful way to live. The large part of the world lives like that. So what a wonderful challenge here.

And whatever comes, it's a life situation, and the challenges of your life situation, they draw out that which is deeper. So without the challenges, you would be comfortably sitting in your armchair for the next 30 years, or until you retire, and watching your investments grow and grow, and then drop dead. And you would live with complete certainty that you're being looked after because you've got your life insurance, and your investments are growing every year, and nothing can possibly go wrong, and there's nothing.

Okay, everything is great. Watch TV every day for five hours, and that's it. No evolution, no flowering of consciousness, and then there's somebody else who made a total mess of his or her life, and ends up in prison, and sits there for 20 years, and suddenly wakes up in the midst of that, and realizes, I am life.

And the situation is just relatively unimportant. To feel that who I am in my essence is beyond any limitation on the external level. So that's why I often get letters from people in prison that say, I have woken up in prison.

I'm free. I'm no longer unhappy. And I have another 20 years to do, nor I'm not unhappy anymore.

I rarely get letters from people who say, I've woken up because my investments are growing every year. In fact, I've never had a letter. Sometimes I get letters from people who wake up because they encounter some physical illness, and often change happens then.

Any challenge has the opportunity to wake up. If you're not being challenged by life, then wait. It'll come.

Now isn't that wonderful? That means that whatever happens now is no longer some problem that comes into your life. It's a challenge.

It's not a dreadful thing. It's great. It's an opportunity to be more conscious, more present with what is.

So that brings us back to the first two lines of that book. Life is difficult. Of course, it's full of challenges.

But once you know that, and say, that's what it is, then it's no longer difficult. It just is what is. It only remains difficult if you have the idea stuck in your head that it shouldn't be.

It's a paradox. Life is difficult, and once you know that it's difficult, it's no longer difficult. Knowing that it's difficult implies accepting that it's difficult.

But to say it is difficult only when you resist life. So what this implies is, it's when the resistance goes, then it's no longer called difficult. It's challenging.

And every challenge brings increased aliveness. My friend Steve, who is here, can testify to that because he was faced with a challenge recently of being stuck in a hotel room in Bombay with mad terrorists running all around the building for several days. And he went deep inside.

It wasn't difficult for him because he was already immersed in presence for many years. So he was able to step out of the situation, which certainly could be called difficult, and go deep within into the power of the present moment, into consciousness itself. Welcome to our private seminar.

I'm talking about spiritual awakening in daily life. And some people may not be quite sure what the term spiritual awakening even means. Or they may have strange ideas in their head of what spiritual is, what is spiritual, and what is awakening.

And instead of defining right now, I'm just going to talk about spiritual awakening in daily life. And as I talk, what spiritual means and what awakening means, will hopefully emerge while we talk. So instead of defining beforehand, what these things are, because although we're not, this is not a talk on philosophy.

So we're not here to define terms. It's an experiential thing. It's not information based.

We're here to experience something and then to bring that into daily life, live it in our daily existence. Everybody has done some traveling and sightseeing, visited unfamiliar places, European cathedrals perhaps, or the pyramids in Egypt, or Machu Picchu, Stonehenge in England, whatever it may be. And it's often an interesting experience for me to go into a place and walk around doing some sightseeing.

Let's say it's a cathedral, an ancient cathedral in Europe. And you walk in there. And usually you have little groups of people with a guide.

They walk around, the guide has now come this way, in different languages. The guide explains what this means, when it was built, or who is, this is a tomb, or this king, or whoever lies there, and all kinds of interesting information. And just occasionally when I walk into a place like that, an ancient cathedral, I kind of approach the little group and just listen in and stand at the side and just see what he's saying.

Sometimes quite interesting, but I never feel drawn to actually sticking around for very long, because I prefer to explore the place by myself without the interference of a voice explaining to me what things are. Now it may well be that I may have read a guidebook beforehand, or I may not. In most cases probably I have not looked at a guidebook beforehand, so I'm actually going into this, let's say it's a medieval cathedral, I'm walking into this medieval cathedral not knowing very much about it, except it was built a thousand years ago, whatever, and it took two or three hundred years to build.

But I prefer that experience of entering a space and not being burdened by information about it, rather than entering a space and immediately being bombarded with facts about it. There are two very different kinds of experiencing that place. One kind of experiencing that place is based on bits and pieces of information, on knowledge, on mental knowledge, on mind.

And this is how why most people travel for that reason, because they want to learn new things. So as soon as they enter the cathedral, they say, okay, I'm going to join this guided tour. Or these days they have invented something to substitute the human guide.

You can rent a little device recording with earphones, and you can choose your language, and you put it on your ears, and then you choose your language, and then it tells you where to go. Now turn right here, stop here, and then it starts explaining it. You look, and you're continuously learning a lot, and then, okay, walk on now ten steps, and now look up to the left, and you will see more information coming in, very interesting, and learning so much about history.

It's true, you are. You're learning a lot. And so you walk around this cathedral with the voice in your head, teaching you about it.

What's wrong with that? Nothing. It's fine.

Why don't I do that? Because there is another way of experiencing, of perceiving that place. And that's not something that people even know about.

Some people do it intuitively. And that way is going into that place, and not perceive whatever is around you through the veil of facts, information, knowledge, thoughts, ultimately. It all comes down through thoughts, one thought after another.

There is another way of perceiving that place that is not based on mind activity. And I love that other way more than the way of learning about. There's nothing wrong with

that.

Sometimes I read a guidebook afterwards, after I've been to a place like that, I read, oh, that's what I saw, and have a little bit of information about it. But at first, I love entering that place and perceiving, first of all, the totality of this, the vast, let's say it's a cathedral, it could be other places, but there's always, there's a spaciousness there, there's a vastness, there's a silence, interrupted, of course, sometimes by the voice of the guides here and there, and the clicking of cameras, but there is still a vastness, a silence, there's a, the whole place has a presence.

There's an energy field there. And the first thing that I love to take in is to enter and to take in the totality of that energy field that is this ancient cathedral, to sense it, to feel it directly. And there's a, it has its own presence, it's an energy field.

I like to get in touch with this ancient energy field, ancient and new, because it's still alive. And then look around at this architecture, and so on, and again, just see the shapes, the forms, the colors. So you see, be aware also of the space itself, because anybody who goes into a place like that and is struck by something, they go, wow.

Even people who later seek out the guide, there may be a few seconds when they take in this and go, they sense something, a sacred presence, you could almost say. They sense it, they don't need to know anything about it. In fact, you cannot sense the presence of that place if your mind is full of thoughts, full of knowledge.

And if you enter a cathedral and you are, let's say, you are already very knowledgeable, you're a historian or whatever, and you know much, you would have to let go for a moment of all that you know, if you truly wanted to experience that place. So I always a little bit feel sorry for most tourists, because they don't seem to be aware that there is another way of experiencing life. There is another way of perceiving other than the mind, through the mind only.

There's nothing wrong with the mind, it has its place, and it's needed for quite a few things. But for many other things, for realising the depths of life and becoming a deep person, that's a strange expression that's sometimes used. You say, this person has a depth, or we speak of a depth of perception.

What does that mean for a person? You would say, there's a shallow person and there's a deep person. What does that mean?

I would say it means what we might call a shallow person, a person who is totally trapped only in the mind activity, the knowledge accumulated by the mind, and perceives everything through thoughts. In other words, you walk around your life like the tourist who rents this little device and comments about what they are perceiving continuously. That's fine, sometimes it may be necessary, but imagine going through life

not being able to get rid of that device.

You can't take it off anymore. It keeps commenting. So wherever you go in the street, it says, okay, look at that person there.

And the thing even tells you whether you like it or not. This is great, I like that, or I don't like that. I wish I had an answer on whatever.

And of course, this is how most people live because they are so identified with the involuntary mind activity, the little voice in the head. They don't even know it. They think they are the voice.

And to live through the voice then makes your life quite shallow because whatever you experience lacks depth. You experience it through a concept. Every thought is conceptual.

So when let's say you are in the street, a man or woman comes towards you and your mind immediately has to say something about whether you like or don't like or would like to do something with this person, whatever it may be, or have some kind of reference point or commenting on the way they look, weird or strange or nice, I'd love to, whatever. Is there another way of perceiving this human being? Yes, to perceive the human in the same way, if that's what I said about the cathedral, if that resonates with you, if you have had a glimpse of that experience or perhaps more than a glimpse, then you know the difference between stepping into a place and going, no comment.

Well, perhaps the mind says, oh, this is so beautiful. And then there's stillness again. So there is a still space through which you perceive instead of concepts through which you perceive.

And suddenly, there's a depth, not only you feel another dimension is suddenly present, not only outside of you, another dimension that the tourist who is totally dependent on either the mechanical guide or the human guide is not aware of that, that the tourist who only listens to the commentary misses the true aliveness, the sacredness, and the depths of that place. And so, also within, you are trapped in the head, there's no depth then to you as a human being, where there's something that responds to life, something deeper than the commentary in your head. And so many people these days are trapped then with this guide, the tourist guide they can't get rid of, and it's called your mind.

And so, not that the mind is not a useful tool. And even in the cathedral, it sometimes, it adds a little bit to it, if you know something about it. And I would say that's the second stage, to come back just for a moment to this cathedral analogy, one could almost say, you come back to that, of course, ideally, and what I do that occasionally, but sometimes we don't have enough time, because when we travel, first, I love to experience the place without knowing anything, and truly experience it, the depths of it.

And then perhaps go back to the hotel room, and then look at a guidebook, and then learn a few facts about it, can be quite helpful. Then go back the next day, look at it again. And then you have a balance between knowing things about it, and still being able to experience it.

So in other words, you have then some information in your head is, oh, this is, I read about that. It was built by such and such, then and then, whatever. And then again, you have the spaciousness where you perceive.

And then you look at something else, and you are, this is the statue of the saint, so and so. And some, some knowledge about it, that you have had, might have overlooked a little detail. You can actually see a tear coming out of his eye or whatever.

Oh, yeah, there's a tear, he seems to be crying. Don't know why, but it seems And then again, you can, you can take it in without the commentary. So that's a little, you can experiment with that.

And so I'm using that almost as just an analogy for the whole of your life. Most people are stuck with the tourist guide in the head. It comments continuously of what's going on in your life and evaluates and interprets and defines in words, everything that you perceive.

And so, in whatever way it is defined or interpreted depends on your particular conditioning, on the way you were brought up, what you were taught by the surrounding culture, and so on. So the kind of tourist guide you have depends on your past. And so it's really your past talking to you continuously, certain forms of conditioning from your culture, your education, your family background, what you have read, your fears and ambitions are also expressed there as thought structures, which become thoughts, what you would like, want, what you fear, what if that happens?

Oh my God, this could go wrong. What if, of course, it becomes very problematic, because the voice doesn't stop talking. Except occasional moments, when you suddenly feel a heightened sense of aliveness, perhaps you're out in nature, and you're looking up at a tree or a forest, and for a moment you say, wow.

And then after a few seconds, the mind says, that's beautiful. But for about 10 seconds or 20 seconds, the mind wasn't saying anything. And that's the reason that you can know that it's beautiful.

Beautiful is not, the mind cannot really, the mind is concepts. There's no beauty really in that. If something from within you responds to beauty, for example, in nature, for a moment, there must have been a space of where the tourist guide in the head stopped talking.

And in that space, there is a deeper experiencing of whatever is there. There's a depth to

your experience. What does that mean?

It means, yes, what you see is the same. But the state of consciousness through which you see it has deepened. A space has opened up inside you through which the perception happens.

And that's the depths. So you could say, when you look at something, and for a moment, you're not interpreting what you see. There's just the seeing.

And you may be aware of the background to what you see, which cannot be defined. But there's a stillness inside while you perceive. This is what I meant when I talked about entering a cathedral without the knowledge in your head.

So suddenly the mind has become still. And the perception happens. So you have two dimensions, you have a stillness in the background.

And whatever is going on outside is there. The stillness is the depth that changes your perceptions. Then you see that the tree also has a depth to it and an aliveness and a sacredness that you didn't know before.

When you were conceptualizing the tree and said, oh, that's such and such a tree and whatever knowledge you have, or this tree is in my grandmother's garden too, or this, I'd like to chop this tree up and use it as my Christmas tree, or I wonder how much it would be worth the timber if I cut it, how much the timber would be worth. You're not really, the tree is a surface phenomenon when you're in that state of consciousness, a utilitarian surface phenomenon. You cannot sense the depths, the aliveness, the sacredness of the tree.

And I'm only using tree as one of many possible examples. Life, the tree stands for life. It could be a human being.

You cannot sense the aliveness of that if you are totally trapped in conceptualization in your head. So there needs to be a depth to you in order to recognize that there is also a depth in life. Otherwise you walk around for the rest of your life skimming the surface of life.

Just every human being is a surface phenomenon because you just have judgments about them and whatever, it's just no depth. And then you can go into nature, and even there you will not know that nature has a sacredness to it, because you can't sense it, because you haven't, the space isn't there inside you to sense that when you go into a forest, an ancient forest, you've been there for thousands of years, that, and you cannot sense that that is a sacred space, because otherwise you would go, wow. And then you would, and if you don't know it's sacred and our civilization doesn't know, he looks at the forest as a utilitarian thing, how much would it be worth?

So the people who cut down the ancient forests, they don't know what they are doing because they cannot sense that there's more there than what appears to be there on the surface of things. But since they themselves are trapped in the surface of their own mind only, they have no idea what they are doing when they log an ancient forest. To them it's just a utilitarian thing.

You talk to them and say, what are you talking about? We're going to plant trees again. Yeah, but it'll take a thousand years to reach that sacredness.

No idea what you say, sacredness, what do you mean? It's a tree. We are harvesting the trees.

And so, and this is one example of what happens when you cannot get out of the conceptualizing mind. Life has no depth anymore. And getting out of the conceptualizing mind is what I call spiritual awakening.

So spiritual awakening has nothing to do with some kind of, suddenly you have a new spiritual thoughts in your head and you start talking about angels or even God. You suddenly start talking about God all the time and then people say, oh, he's become spiritual. No, he hasn't.

He's become religious. Religious without spiritual is an ideology. You could be a communist and then talk in those terms, whatever.

It's an ideology. Sometimes religious and spiritual can go together. But in many cases, religious only is just more thoughts in your head, but different kinds of thoughts.

And then God, of course, becomes my God. And your God is not the right one. And then you become my enemy.

And I will conceptualize you as the non-believer, for example. And the non-believers are evil, another concept. And the non-believers must be killed because we know the truth.

And the truth is our God. Concepts, concepts in the mind. You can no longer sense.

And then when you do kill somebody, you're not killing a human being because you cannot sense that there is a being there, another human being. You are killing. There's a mental concept there.

You have conceptualized, you have deadened, just as you've deadened the forest to yourself, you've deadened the other human being and made him into a, you put some label on. Non-believer. American.

And so it's not a human being, it's American. This is, and that's how it, this is how the madness grows. So, and of course, they don't know what, what's happened to them.

They don't realize what's happening. They are unconscious. And not unconscious in the conventional sense of the word, because unconscious in the conventional sense of the word means they're lying there.

No, not that unconscious. They seem to be very conscious, seem to be very alert with their guns or whatever they're doing. But they are unconscious because they are totally trapped in the conceptualizing mind.

They no longer sense the aliveness of life. They have deadened themselves. They don't know who they are beyond the conceptualizing mind, where they are completely identified with their belief structures that gives them, the belief structures give them their identity, their sense of who they are.

I am a, whatever label they have, we are, the we, we are, the only true, etc., etc. And then it's the others, it's the others, them, they're not alive. They're just their concepts.

So it's easy to, when you no longer sense what you're doing, to kill another human becomes easy because you no longer know that the human, the depths of the human being has disappeared. And that's perhaps why Jesus on the cross said, forgive them for they know not what they do. They have, in other words, they are unconscious.

They have not awakened. And so we are coming here from the tourists, going into a cathedral, we've, we've, and we've arrived at terrorists. Just an extension of really what is considered a normal state of consciousness.

And what it does to you to be trapped in that your whole life is a dreadful fate. And the reason why we are on this planet, why we have arrived at such a point of extreme crisis is that this state of consciousness that we have been trapped in for thousands of years is, has created and is creating increasing havoc and destruction. It destroys nature, it destroys human beings, destroying each other.

What we do externally is always a reflection of the predominant collective state of consciousness. And if you read the 20th century history, you see what human beings have done to each other. The only conclusion you can reach is they are mad.

It's quite mad. And 20th century is just the most extreme form of that madness where human beings kill each other by the millions. Often they don't even know what, what for.

In the end, you don't even know anymore what, what the whole thing is for. The First World War, they, what was that whole thing about? And then the First World War led to the Second World War and so on and innumerable other wars.

So we need the spiritual awakening then is for the planet or humanity to survive is an absolute necessity. So there's a depth of consciousness to you of which the thought activity is only like little ripples. You could say there's a vast ocean or lake, very deep,

with lots of waves and ripples on the surface.

And the waves and ripples on the surface are the thoughts in your head. And so most people are trapped on that level. They don't realize that there is a depth underneath that, that is vast.

And that if they ever wanted to become creative human beings or bring anything new into this world, they would have, it would have to come from the depths. It can't come from this, just the surface activity of your mind. That's repetitive, continuously, same, same kind of thing.

Nothing creative can ever happen on that level alone. One day I'm going to compose a great piece of music. One day I'm going to write a great book.

Just have to wait. Well, not if you don't get out of that. Of course, the mind is needed to write a book, yes.

But you cannot have a deep or inspired thought if you don't make room, a moment for the depths inside you so that you touch something deeper. You need to become still for a moment when you sit in front of your computer or piece or notepad and want to write something new and creative, bring something new into this world. Well, where does that come from?

From the repetitive noise in your head? No. It comes if for a moment the repetitive noise in your head subsides.

That's the moment of stepping into the cathedral. Ah. And then you wait.

So there's a, open yourself to the stillness inside. It's there. You don't have to make yourself still.

Underneath, even in the most mad, the maddest person, underneath that, there is the realm of stillness. They just can't touch it. It's there.

So it's very easy to actually embrace, say, okay, you don't need to think all the time. You need to have spaces of no thought and it's not that difficult unless you're totally mad. But not that many people are totally mad.

Most people are partially mad. And the madness comes up occasionally in a more acute form. It's there.

So can you walk into the cathedral and be there as an aware presence rather than a mind burdened with knowledge? Can you walk along the street and look at another human being? Without commenting, just look and sense.

When there's no commenting, you can sense there's an aliveness in the other human

being. There's an essence there that is deeper than, even deeper than your mind and deeper than their mind. And if you then communicate with that human being, while you, for example, while you listen to them, can you be still inside while you listen?

You might be talking about the weather. It doesn't matter. But be still and just be there as the space for that human being as you are there.

You are there at the space as the space for the tree and realize what an incredible phenomenon this tree is. Beyond anything that you could know about it through the mind, what you know may be useful for certain things, but there's a depth to that thing that we call tree that you cannot capture through that, but you can sense something. And the more you sense it outside, the deeper you go within.

And there is an even greater depth in another human being. And the more you sense the depth of aliveness in another human being, the more you sense it in yourself. It always goes together.

So relationships become problematic if both parties are totally trapped in their noise-making mind, then very quickly conflict arises in relationships. And that's why relationships are full of conflict because people can't get out of that. They have, they are trapped in here.

So every discussion when they disagree becomes conflict. You have an opinion. This is how it is.

I'm right. You identify with your mental position. Your partner has a different mental position.

No, you're not. I'm right. You identify with your opinion.

Identify means your sense of self is in the thought that you have in your mental position of this is how it is. Today, it's cold. Your partner says, no, it's not cold.

It's just mild. No, it's cold. I'm just giving an oversimplified example.

Even that could lead to an argument because are you accusing me of being a liar? Also moving in concepts. Well, you did lie last week.

I wasn't lying. I was just... And it goes on and on and on.

And it's all happening. The entire relationship is mind. Mind against mind.

So you identify with mind and that becomes the ego. The me that needs to be right. Always.

If the ego is wrong, it's death. It thinks, I'm dead. I'll die.

Can't be wrong. I need to defend my position. Dread will fade.

But it's normal. So having realized then that what is needed is to awaken out of complete identification with the continuous stream of thinking in your mind. Okay.

Well, how do we do that? Simple first step is to realize that there is a continuous stream of thoughts in your mind. This is the first step of awakening.

It's not saying I shouldn't be thinking. No, the first step is to realize that there is a voice that talks most of the time inside you. And perhaps that until now you had been so identified with the voice that was you.

You were talking to yourself. Sometimes people talk to themselves as I. Sometimes people talk to themselves as you.

You have a little voice that says you should have done that. Why didn't you do that? You're talking to...

The voice is talking to some other voice. And then perhaps there's an answer. Well, I couldn't help it.

Yeah, but you should have... So sometimes the voice splits itself into different voices. Talking to each other becomes even more mad.

And sometimes the voice also can have certain streams that one stream of the voice only comes up in certain circumstances. What some psychologists, they have discovered that this is the case. Some psychologists call it sub-personalities.

So in certain circumstances, perhaps a whining little girl suddenly comes up. But you're 30 years old. Why are you still...

It's a sub-personality. And suddenly you have a whining voice in your head that complains about how unfair life is treating me. It's a sub-personality talking.

And then when that subsides, something else happens. And another voice suddenly comes in and becomes extremely aggressive. Another stream, another aspect of that has arisen.

And so sometimes different voices take over. But really it all belongs ultimately to the one thing, the one voice in your head. So the first step to awakening, the beginning of awakening is to realize there's a voice in my head.

And it's especially useful to realize in the moment of it saying, for example, voices have all, most of the mind activities, old thoughts, old patterns, repetitive thoughts. For example, I had when I was younger, I had a frequent thought that said, whenever something that wasn't good happened to me, or that my mind interpreted as not good,

the voice in my head would say, you see, bad things always happen to you. And then I was just waiting for the next bad thing to confirm that I was right.

And it would never have to wait for very long and something else would go wrong in my life. And I would say, you see, it's happening again. Always bad things to you.

I don't know why it's always you. And then, of course, you experience the emotion that goes with that kind of thought. And I completely believed in that thought.

I was so identified with that thought, I didn't realize this is just a thought in my head. It's not the reality. It's a conditioned way of interpreting the phenomenal world, the world outside you.

And so the liberation then comes with beginning to realize the voice is saying the same thing again and again and again. And it's not me. It's the voice.

Who realizes that? You. So there is a deeper dimension is suddenly there and you become aware that all the stuff that your mind is saying to you and to others when you have is not ultimately who you are.

But the awareness that at this moment, your mind is reproducing the same old thoughts. They are beginning to touch the depths that is within yourself that we could call the awareness, the aware presence, because knowing that there is thought in my head is not a thought. It's just a looking in internal aware.

Why do bad things always happen to me? And then you look at the thought and you realize the thought. So you begin to one could almost say you listen to your thoughts.

You become aware of the kinds of thoughts you think. And when this is for many people, the first awakening and what people realize when they first awaken, not everybody, because some people's thoughts are not too bad. They can live with it quite well.

They saw their thought activity is not predominantly negative, but many people actually find that when they become aware of their thoughts, they realize how many thoughts are actually negative. The majority of people become aware that the larger part of your mind activity is negative thoughts. There are far more negative thoughts than positive thoughts.

Not in everybody. Some people have quite a few positive thoughts. One could almost say it's easier for people who are trapped in a lot of negative thinking to step out of their thinking than people who have relatively nice thoughts.

Their inner urge to awaken is not as strong. If you live in a self-made nightmare as I did, the impulse to awaken is much stronger. Then you really, I can't stand my mind anymore.

I don't want to live with this mind anymore. Oh, that's good. It doesn't mean you have to kill yourself.

It just means you have to realize that your mind is not who you are. You are the awareness behind your mind. You are the space because the awareness is space.

It's not a thought. It's consciousness. So we are now slowly getting to what spiritual awakening is because we have looked at what spiritual sleep is.

We've seen what it means to be asleep or unconscious, normal in other words, normal existence. The entire world, not the entire world, there's some awakening here and there. More and more people, in fact, are awakening, going through the awakening process.

We now know what that is because it means you're no longer identified with the mind. Who are you if you're not your mind? You are the consciousness out of which every thought comes.

And then it pops back. It's like a wave or ripple. You are the consciousness that is far greater than any single thought or even greater than the totality of thought.

And that consciousness is experienced when you first touch it as inner stillness. Stillness doesn't mean you go to sleep. It means the mind is where the mind was before.

There's a space. And out of that space comes all creativity, every great realization or insight that any human being has ever had. The creative impulse comes out of the vast intelligence that is there.

And then the mind, it flows into the mind and the mind becomes an instrument for that. And that's how the mind can be a beautiful thing. When it's not just self-serving, but it is serving something greater than itself.

The mind as a master is mad. The mind as a servant is a great thing. So that's the shift in consciousness that is happening and needs to happen on this planet.

The mind finds its place as the servant of consciousness or awareness. So it's up to you then to invite the consciousness that you are beyond the mind into your daily life. And how do you do that?

You do that by inviting space, inner space or inner stillness into your life. For example, while you make a cup of tea or coffee, why not try to practice being still with every movement, just be aware, bring awareness into that every movement, pour the water, no commentary, look at a flower, look at a tree, look at the sky. And for just a few seconds, just look, listen to the wind, listen to the rain, listen to whatever sound you can hear and just listen.

Bring the attention to sense perceptions, attention to sense perceptions. That means the mind is quiet while you listen. The mind is quiet while you look.

And that's a little practice that you can do many times during the day and it will deepen your life. It will bring spaces into an otherwise, an existence that goes from one thing that you have to do to another thing you have to do and another thing you have to think about now. Then there's no gaps.

So the gaps are vital in daily life, inviting gaps into your daily existence, looking for the gaps in daily existence. In everyday situations, a helpful thing, as many of you already know, is to feel that your body is actually alive inside. Normally people are not aware of that because their whole attention is on thought activity.

But if you can feel that your body is alive, so some attention can be in the energy field of your hands and you feel, yes, they feel alive. There is an aliveness that pervades the entire body. Your body is full of life.

But most people can't feel that. So if you can feel the inner body that you are alive inside, the entire body at this very moment is a vibrating, alive energy field. And it actually feels good to have some of your attention there, even while you're looking around the room.

You can just, for people, people who are new to this can just start by doing it with their hands, feel the aliveness that's in your hands. You can feel it perhaps even more with your eyes closed. And then you can still feel it even when your eyes are open.

Simultaneous thing, you're present inside your body and you're present outside in your sense perceptions. What does that do? It means your mind becomes quite still because you can't be thinking also at the same time because you're already present in the body and you're present outside.

You become awake, really awake to this moment then. And your mind, there's not enough attention left then for thinking. Part of your attention is in the inner body and part of your attention is on your perceptions.

And what you perceive then is more alive than it was before. It's more surprising. It's more, it has more depth to it.

Every human being is more interesting then, more really there, new. Things are, you no longer feel that you're experiencing the same old thing again and again. Life then is always new.

Every day is a new day. It's not a repetition. As people grow older, they reach 30 years, 40 years, 50 years.

And for many people, life becomes more and more boring because it's so repetitive. And they no longer look anywhere. They go every day, they go to work, the same place.

They don't look at anything anymore. There's nothing to look at. I looked at it yesterday and last year and five years ago.

What's there to look at? And even people they live with for a few years, after a few years you don't look at your wife or husband anymore. They're part of the furniture.

And you don't look at your paintings anymore on the wall because they've been there for too long. You can't look. They're old.

And really, nothing new. And then you become that kind of person who said, I've seen it all. Don't tell me about it.

I know it all. I've had, yeah, I know. I know that kind of person.

I know that kind of thing. I've been there, done it. Been there, done it.

Life becomes more and more dull. Been there, done it. You're not there and you're not.

And so that's the, that's the fate of many people as they grow old in our civilization. And only a few, perhaps an increasing number now because more and more people are awakening spiritually. They remain alive, perhaps even become more alive as they grow older.

And then you have a truly, and then the person doesn't actually, you don't get, even if they are 70, 80 years old, you don't get the impression that they are old people. Because there is a light shining through their eyes. There is an aliveness to them.

And occasionally you meet people like that. They may be old in terms of calendar years, but they are not old inside. Because they are not, they are not burdened by their mind anymore.

Their mind is, can be used, but they are no longer being used by their mind, which says, I already know all this. And so every day is new and fresh and every moment is still alive. Because you're not putting your past, you're not obscuring it with past, the accumulated past in your head, putting it onto the aliveness of the present moment, stifling the aliveness of the present moment.

And so then spiritual awakening is then intrinsically connected with the aliveness of the present moment, the only place where life is. And so you are more and more open to the now rather than live continuously in past and future, which is normal. For most people it's future until they reach a certain age where there's not much future left, and then they live mostly in the past.

That's why old people, many old people continuously talk about the past. And the younger people continuously think about their future, where they're going to finally make it someday and find fulfillment in some future. When they have done or achieved this, whatever it may be, it could be a big house or recognition, or for spiritually inclined people it could be enlightenment.

But it's put into the future. I'm going to reach that place and then I'll be finally fully myself, fulfilled, happy, alive. I will become alive one day, fully alive.

But without ten million dollars in the bank, I don't think I can feel alive. Because I really need to have that sense of security, you know. I need the sense of security without which I'll just be in fear the way I've always been.

And you'll be surprised if the ten million dollars happen to come to you for a few weeks, you will feel alive. And one night you'll wake up and you'll be in the same fear as before. Because the stock market is about to collapse.

So spiritual awakening is becoming awake to the aliveness of this moment. And becoming awake to the aliveness of this moment, the all there ever is, nothing else is ever going to come. You can wait for millions of years if you lived that long.

Nothing is ever going to come that's not this moment. Your life will always be this moment. And it sounds, well, we know that.

No, you don't. If you don't live it, you don't know it. Life is always this moment.

You don't know this if you don't live it. It's only through living it that you know it. Otherwise it's just a concept in your head.

Yeah, of course, life is always this moment. And then what's next? Where's the next moment?

So you might as well then become friendly with this moment if there's nothing else. Be open to that. Don't stifle it with an excessive amount of judgments and interpretations and definitions.

But be open to the aliveness of this moment. Open means there's spaciousness here. So the shift is from a thought-based entity, which is the normal old way for humans, been for thousands of years, to a deeper entity that is based in awareness of presence, consciousness.

So because when you're not commenting on things compulsively, who are you? When you're not continuously thinking about me and my problems, at this very moment, let's say, pretend that you don't remember your past at this moment. In fact, you don't because at this moment, unless you start a thought process, at this moment, your past is

not here.

You're just sitting here now. But pretend for a moment, actually, there's no past and there's no future. What's left of you?

If I removed from your past and your future from you now, what's left? I remember nothing. What's left?

I don't remember my name. Who are you? I don't know.

But there must be something there. Yes, there is something there. But I can't say what it is.

That's who you are. Consciousness itself. When you remove the content from consciousness for a while, then you realize that you are consciousness.

When the content, content is thoughts and emotions and thoughts and thoughts. When the content comes back, it obscures the reality that you are consciousness and you identify with content. And that's why some people have been able to awaken spiritually because life took away their content.

They lost everything suddenly. They lost their reputation, in other words, their name. It happens sometimes that life does these things to people.

They lost their money, their possessions. They lost even their family. They suddenly were killed in an accident, a big earthquake came, everything lost.

And they sit there, their house is in ruins, everything gone. And suddenly, some of these people suddenly had a deep spiritual awakening. Why?

Because life took away all the things that they had identified with as themselves, as the me. And what was left was what we just did now, here, when I asked you to pretend that there's no past and future, we took away for a moment content from your life. And when you remove content, because content is going to disappear anyway, it's not permanent.

Whatever content you have is impermanent in your life, things come and go. Or as the Buddha says, it's impermanence is the word. Transient.

Everything is transient. And that refers to content. So as long as you are identified with all the content in your life that can go very quickly, even your body can go very quickly.

But if you just, beyond content is consciousness itself, rather than what consciousness has identified with. And you are that. I am that.

You and I, on that level, are the same. We are, you're in essence, the essence of who you are is consciousness. Everything else is added temporarily.

It's a disguise. Consciousness disguising itself as this and that and that person, appearing in this particular form. That's the play.

Lila, the divine play of life, as it's called in India. And that's fine. The play is not to be rejected.

It's what you can only enjoy the play of the phenomenal existence, if you know what is beyond phenomenal existence. So it's only if you know who you are beyond all the things in your life, you can actually truly enjoy the things in your life, while they last. And you don't need to cling, because you know nothing is going to last.

Relationships, whatever, it's only very young people who think there are lasting things. Then you reach a certain age and you realize, oh, it's so many things have evaporated that I thought were permanent. And more things are going to evaporate.

And a few more things are going to come and then evaporate. So not to live and your life is no longer content based, but essence based. I'm giving you here in one little talk, the entire essence of what spirituality really is all about.

And that's that really, that's what it is. There's not much else that you need to know beyond that, in the sense of knowledge, accumulated knowledge. It is now a question of living that.

And if you don't want to live it, that's fine. It means you have to suffer a bit more until you're ready to make this shift until the shift begins to happen. A human being needs to reach the point of readiness where they say, okay, I've done enough madness.

I've suffered enough. I'm ready for the shift. I'm ready to say, okay, this moment is all there ever is.

I might as well become friendly with it, acknowledge it, give it attention in whatever form it comes. Because the form is not the moment. It's the form that this moment takes, the now.

It's not what happens. The now is not what happens. It's the space in which it happens.

And essentially, it is that space is consciousness. Everything happens in the light of consciousness. You can say, as some philosophers have done, they question everything.

Some philosophers, they said, is there anything I can be absolutely sure of? Because everything can be doubted. I can doubt that you exist.

You can doubt that I exist. It could be a dream. Who says we are not dreaming right now?

Who says that us sitting here is not a dream? You cannot know for sure. But even if it is a

dream, there must be something real there because the dream must appear to something or someone.

There must be a light in which the dream appears, a space in which the dream happens. So even if it is a dream, the one thing you cannot question is the fact of being itself. Being is.

The being may be a dream or it may not be a dream. But one thing you can be certain is that you are. I am is something that cannot be doubted.

If I'm dreaming that I am, the essence of I am is still there in the dream then. And that's an amazing thing. That's to realize there's one thing that is beyond doubt and that's I am.

It's not as the philosopher Descartes said, I think therefore I am. He confused consciousness with thinking, perhaps because he was always thinking. So he was, he couldn't stop thinking.

And then he said, okay, then if I can't, if I can't stop thinking, then the essence of who I am must be thinking. I think, therefore, I know that I am. Well, he, he, he got, he stopped, he stopped too soon.

He should have taken one more step and realized that beyond thinking there's consciousness. And then realized because I'm conscious, I am. Because there is consciousness, I am.

I am that consciousness. And that consciousness that people believe in our civilization, that the consciousness is a byproduct of chemical reactions in the brain. And many psychologists or scientists actually doubt that there is such a thing as consciousness.

They say, no, there is no consciousness. It's just a chemical soup. But they do recognize that the brain is the most complex thing on the planet.

And they'd understand a tiny fraction of it only. So who built that incredibly complex thing through which consciousness comes, if not consciousness? So consciousness is prior to whatever appears here.

And it's a very complex thing. And what is the relationship between the brain and consciousness? Even some scientists are beginning to say that, recognize the possibility that consciousness may be all pervasive throughout the universe.

And the brain is like a lens through which consciousness enters this dimension. So it's like a receiver. It reduces and receives consciousness.

So when you eliminate the brain, it does not mean you eliminate consciousness. You eliminate the receiver. Like a TV, you can smash the TV and suddenly the image

disappears.

But the TV didn't produce the image. So that is our meditation. I am consciousness.

Not something to believe in. But we're using those words only as a pointer to the essence of who you are. Thank you.

So as we sit here, I'd like to put a little question mark into your mind. And I'd like you to ask yourself whether at this moment you're thinking. So you will know the answer.

And try it again. I'll stop speaking for a few seconds. And just be alert inside yourself to find out whether you're thinking because usually you don't even know that you're thinking you're just you are the thinking.

So there's no outside thing that knows that you are thinking. You are just thinking. You become the thinking, the thinker.

And the thinker is the person. And to step out of the person, you have to experience that there is a dimension in you where the person is not. But something deeper is there.

That's what we want to explore. So again, a moment of stillness. In the power of now, I talk about a cat watching a mouse hole.

Now, if you've ever watched a cat watching a mouse hole, then you will have noticed that a cat could spend a long time there being extremely alert and just watching in the same way that my dog watches a treat when I put it down and say not yet. And then the dog goes. And so the cat watches the mouse hole is in a state of complete attention.

So one spiritual master, I believe it was a Sufi master, said his teacher had been a cat when he was asked who had been his spiritual teacher. He said a cat. How is that?

And he said, I watched a cat watching a mouse hole. And by watching a cat watching a mouse hole, I realized, I awakened. Because by watching a cat, he entered a state of alert attention, in which there's no thinking.

Like now, just that there's no so that just a short moment, but it's not matter how long is, it's a it's a wonderful thing to realize that you can not think. It's a wonderful thing to realize that you're still there when you're not thinking. As Oprah said, when we started for the first time with a moment of silence, and we then we started to talk again, she said, Okay, I'm still here.

I just checked in. I'm still alive. I'm still here.

I haven't disappeared. One more time. Be alert.

You need to be alert to know whether you're thinking or not. So there's an alertness like

a cat. And there may be thinking or they may not be thinking they may just be the alertness.

I also mentioned in the power of now that another question you can ask yourself is, what's my next thought going to be? I'm going to just watch out, see what's the next thought is that's going to come into my mind. If you're very alert, it'll be quite a while before the next thought comes.

But the moment the degree of alertness decreases, thoughts come flooding back in. Interesting experiments you can do with yourself and your mind. Now, from the point of view of the usual thinking mind, the realization that there is a dimension in you where thinking either does not happen at all, or becomes unimportant to the thinking mind that is either a threat or completely uninteresting.

Because what could be less interesting than not thinking? So from the point of view of the thinking mind, the state of consciousness in which there is no thinking is either a threat. Oh, I don't want to go there.

I'm going to disappear. But of course, Oprah didn't disappear after the stillness. I'm still there.

I'm still alive. And then when she said that, I said, perhaps you're even more alive now. And that is pointing to something.

There is an intensification of aliveness when you begin to enter that, let's call it, dimension in yourself. The dimension in which compulsive thinking doesn't operate anymore. But you have to be careful because you could easily, because, that's okay.

What we're doing here is we rise above thinking. We become so alert that thinking either doesn't happen or is seen as unimportant. From there you can easily suddenly drop through thinking to below thought.

In other words, you go towards sleep. So when you stop thinking, there's the alertness. Here's the thinking level.

It's a normal level for most human beings while they are awake. And even when they dream, they're still going on. Here's the thinking level.

Underneath the thinking level, there's consciousness. Above the thinking level, there's consciousness. And even within thinking, there's consciousness.

Thinking is an expression of consciousness. But there are infinite varieties of manifestations or expressions of consciousness. This flower is an expression of consciousness taking on the form, this beautiful form, incredible beauty.

Consciousness being born into forms. And consciousness, not all consciousness is form.

There is a dimension of consciousness that is formless, out of which all forms come, the ground of all being.

And that's what we are exploring here. Thinking, you rise above thinking, or you fall below thinking. My dog is below thinking.

Now that doesn't mean that the dog is stupid. The dog has its own intelligence. And in some ways, the dog is superior to humans in some ways.

For example, it's more joyful than most humans, has more fun than most humans, lives more intensely in the present moment where life is than most humans, doesn't worry, like most humans do, and is loving towards all beings. Some dogs are loving only towards certain beings, but our dog is loving towards all beings. But the dog doesn't think.

The dog is conscious, but there's no conceptual thinking. I'm sure the dog doesn't have thoughts. The other day, the dog was in the bedroom in his little house.

Quite late, it was already night. The dog was already sleeping. And I was still doing things near the door, the entrance door to the apartment.

I was opening the sliding door and looking for something in my coat. And when the dog heard the sliding door near the exit, she came out. She must have woken up and heard a noise, came out running to see what I was doing, whether I was getting my coat to go out.

So she came running. And then for 10 seconds, the dog stood there looking at me and realized I was just taking something out of a pocket, and I wasn't going out. So after five seconds, the dog must have realized I wasn't going out and went straight back into her house and back to sleep.

Now, did the dog begin to think in her house, oh, I can hear something. He's opening the sliding door to the wardrobe. I wonder if he's getting the coat out to go out.

And then I need to have a look because he may leave me alone here. Okay, I'm going to have a look, see what's happening. And then the dog would go and look.

Oh, what's he doing there? Oh, I think he's just taking something out of his pocket. He's not going out after all.

Why did I bother to come out? I might as well go back to sleep. Now, I'm sure that's not how it happened, but that's what would have happened for a human doing that.

Now, the strange thing, how would that happen for a dog? All the whole thing must have happened without conceptualization. There was the listening to the noise, and there was a sudden knowing that that noise of the door could mean that I'm going out.

And then there was just getting up, running out. I'm sure, although you can't really get into the dog's mind, I've tried, I'm sure it was without any decision-making process or mental commentary. There was just an immediate response to a situation, and then there was a recognition of what was going on in that situation, and immediately not a decision to go back to bed, but just a going back to bed.

So there was consciousness there at work, but not through conceptualization. And for humans, of course, it would be usually different. There would be, as you're doing that, there would be the running commentary that I just mentioned, if the dog had a human mind.

There are some anthropologists who have looked at the history of the human race, and they wondered where or how did thinking start? When did humans begin to think? And it seems likely that at first there was no conceptual thinking.

There was only thinking in images. So when they closed their eyes, they should suddenly see certain images of things that had happened or things that they imagined. So the moment they closed their eyes, certain images would be there, and when they opened their eyes, they still lived very much like the dog, just an immediate response without the interference of conceptualization.

And then thinking started. And there's one anthropologist who has put forward the theory. He has some evidence for it.

I forgot what the evidence is, but his theory is very controversial. I believe, however, that he may be right. He believed that at first when thinking began to happen in humans, and thinking in the sense of words in your mind, those humans at first thought that some entity, a god or a spirit, was talking to them.

And so the voice of the god or spirit that suddenly appeared in their head said, oh, you better go to the lake and make sure that you catch another fish. And they would go, oh, why is there no fish today? Somebody is talking.

Why don't you go there? There might be a better catch there. Okay, thank you.

I got a message. I should be going there. It was their own thoughts, but for a long time, because it was something new, they didn't realize that these were their thoughts.

They believed some spirit helper or something was telling them to do something. And then, of course, sometimes it might also be the same kind of voice that is telling these days the terrorists to go and shoot people. You must shoot these evil people.

Go do it. Oh, okay, I'll do it. No idea that they are obeying something that is in their own mind.

And so that's how it all started. And then thousands of years passed. And now we have human beings who are completely identified with mind.

And their whole sense of self is derived from mind, from mind activity. And the awakening of consciousness is the realization that beyond your mind, there is a great depth to who you are, and great freedom, and a far greater intelligence than is in your thinking mind. Then the thinking mind can be used by that greater intelligence.

But for the thinking mind to be used by the greater intelligence, you have to find within yourself that greater intelligence, which we could call unconditioned consciousness. You have to find it in yourself. If we don't find it, we are going to kill ourselves because this evolutionary level where we are identified with thinking is no longer functioning.

It has become destructive. It has reached the end of its lifespan or usefulness. And so if humans don't achieve the transition, they will either regress to an earlier stage of development and then have another go, could take a few hundred thousand years, but the universe is patient, or the species becomes extinct and then consciousness simply decides to move through other channels to express itself.

It could be another life form very easily. Consciousness does not mind through which channel it comes into this world, but it wants to come into this world. I don't know why, but I know that consciousness wants to be born fully into this world from another realm, from the untimeless, unmanifested, where consciousness does not evolve.

It's already full and complete because it's timeless. But from the timeless realm, for consciousness, you can use other words if you want. The Tao, God, transcendental reality, it doesn't matter, just words.

That which we cannot name, it wants to come through, into, through the forms, into this world and somehow do something here. Perhaps it wants to dissolve this world, to outshine this world, to transform it, to spiritualize matter, transformation of the entire universe. But I know what our task is, to wake up here out of being trapped in your own little mind, the little mind.

It's not yours, it's just the human mind. And that's why I started today by asking you to see if you can have a little space inside yourself where you're actually not thinking, but still awake and alert. That's the opening into the greater intelligence.

At first it seems there's nothing happening. No, don't expect anything to happen. That will come.

It's the beginning. You open the door. You're opening the door to another dimension.

Now the thinking mind knows nothing of it and you cannot use it to enter that dimension. The moment you use it and try to figure something out, what's in there, you're out again.

You're not in that dimension anymore.

We are opening the door to another dimension of consciousness within ourselves. And then see if the door can stay open while we go about our daily business, or if it can be open occasionally as we go about our daily business. And from the point of view of the mind, it's not interesting, because to the mind it's nothing.

And that's fine. To the mind it's not interesting. And of course it isn't, because when you're not thinking for a moment, nobody could possibly call that interesting.

It's deeper than interesting. But at first it might appear, well, there's nothing there. There's nothing happening.

But you have to persist and see, wait a little, and see if you can enter that dimension more fully. Just you open the door and first of all you experience not so much a positive thing, but an increasing absence of negative things. All the negative things that are continuously produced by the thinking mind, by unnecessary thinking.

So as you bring that dimension into your life, you experience an increasing absence of the negativity that is normal when you're totally trapped in your mind. All the negative thoughts that go through your head and that emotions then respond to. So our destiny is to shift from thought into the realm of no thought, and then being able to use thought from there.

In fact, who or what is it that then uses thought? The intelligence that is the realm of no thought then uses your mind. And then you become productive in this world.

You contribute something truly new to this world in whatever form, whether you're an artist or a writer, or you work with people, or you are engaged in some organization. You then make a very different contribution because it's no longer ego-based. Ego is the unobserved mind, the mind without awareness, that you mistake for who you are, me, the person.

And it's a dreadful thing to live your entire life never going beyond the personal dimension, never seeing the transcendent dimension in yourself and in the world. So it's essential then to no longer be trapped continuously in thought. And don't expect results from the dimension of no thought.

It could be a while before there's any tangible result on an external level, in other words, that you suddenly write a masterpiece, or you suddenly become a great performer, or suddenly you help thousands of people with this or that, become a beneficial influence in this world. It could take a while, and we don't know what form it'll take. It may not happen immediately, that as you begin to enter that dimension occasionally, and then the mind says, you see, nothing is happening.

I've been practicing being free of thinking for a few months now, and my life hasn't changed at all, still the same. In fact, it's become less interesting because I worry less. Of course, worry makes your life very interesting, and it gives you the impression that your life is so important.

I have, my life is so important that I'm worrying all the time, and these are very important things I need to worry about. And so then from the point of view of the mind, your life has become less important. So, okay, I've been doing it for several months, that's enough.

I'm going back to my old ways. And sometimes people write to me and say, okay, I've been practicing awareness, presence for a year now, and where do I go from here? And there were years when I lived mainly in the state of awareness without any, many tangible results.

Occasionally, I would help people, that was very nice, I enjoyed that, help would, not I would help, but help would come through that opening. But beyond that, there wasn't much happening that went on for years. And occasionally I thought, well, there is more that could happen, but it's not happening yet, but that's fine.

And in the meantime, there was a, I realized retrospectively, there was a, whatever words we use are not quite right, but let's just put it like this, there was a build-up gradually of energy, of presence power, one could say. There was an intensification of that in the background of my life that had no visible manifestation really in the external, not very much. And so that presence was there and one day, in fact, I gave a little, it came to me to say, please, I can do more.

I said to myself, accelerate, please, accelerate, acceleration. I was talking to myself because you're always just talking to yourself. And then a little bit later it happened and then the energy stream came that became a book and so on.

And an intensification of what I was doing already on a very small scale, but suddenly there was a coming into this world. But for years, there was just empty space mostly inside, walking around and just very pleasant, enjoying the beauty of every moment of the trees and of the animals. And something was there in the background and then finally it came into this world.

And perhaps when it's, it may well be that after a while the energy stream that goes out may subside again and I just go back into just the space. In some way I do that continuously because after a talk you go back into. So there's the coming out of the consciousness stream going into words and into energy that flows out and then return into just stillness, space.

No need to think very much unless there's something to think about. Where am I going

for dinner? Where do I have enough?

But even there you can, it's amazing how many things you can do without unnecessary thinking and just experiment. I recommend that you experiment in your daily life. This is the most beautiful spiritual practice.

Experiment whether you can do many little things without the interference of thinking, with just presence or awareness there. Because what I mean by that is you are conscious that you're doing something, but you're not thinking about it. And whether you can actually even register things without formulating words in your mind.

If you have a, if you, little things, little experiments, it's all very fascinating. You can have a little clock, if you have a watch or a clock that doesn't have, especially if it doesn't have digitals on it, you can experiment with yourself and see whether you can look at a clock or a watch and know what time it is without in your mind telling yourself what time it is. And that's quite a strange thing.

There is a knowing without conceptualization then. If you know that it is a certain time, whatever it is, without saying to yourself that time it is. You don't do it with a digital clock because when you read the numbers it's almost impossible not to say the numbers in your mind.

Just one little experiment. And then many other things when you're doing a certain task, every master, when the moment you become a master you don't think anymore. Intuition takes over.

Otherwise you can't be a master. Now sometimes you have to learn first gradually through the mind to do something. There may be certain steps that you need to learn, whether you're building something or whatever it is that you do, learning to play the piano or whatever it is.

At first it's driving a car, whatever. At first it takes effort to learn, to become an artist, a painter. You learn the techniques and so on.

And then a moment comes when all that is not helpful anymore. If you never go beyond the techniques you won't be a great artist. The great artist knows the techniques and then steps beyond it and then something else takes over.

And that's where your life becomes empowered. But you need to open the door to the empowerment. You cannot get there through thinking.

And even something that seems to be an intellectual thing like writing a book, if there's any inspiration or power in the book, whether it's fiction or non-fiction, it has to come from the place, the empty space inside you that you go into where you, for a moment you close your eyes and then you look again and nothing comes. You go back and you

look again until something comes through spontaneously. But it won't come spontaneously.

You have to have learned, you need to learn to write first before you, I mean, before you can write a book you need to be able to write. Or if you want to become a great tennis player, you cannot go into the state of no thought very deeply and suddenly step on the tennis court and take a rack and be immediately a great tennis player. You have to go through many steps first before the intuition can take over.

But that's where the dividing line is between somebody who has learned to do something well, and many people do that, and somebody who brings in something new or goes beyond doing something technically well, where inspiration comes in, where empowerment comes in. So it's vital to find that dimension in yourself. So go around your daily life, see how much you can actually do without the interference of conceptualization.

It's amazing, and observe yourself. Is it possible for you to be for a moment free of thinking at any given time? For example, now, no thought, just presence.

You haven't disappeared, but what is there to add to this moment by thinking about something? Nothing. You don't need to add anything.

And what is there then when you're not thinking? What's there left of you, what you had called you? There is definitely something there.

No past, let's say, because to have a past you need to think about your past. To have a future you need to think about your future. Now, if you're not thinking about your past and your future, you don't have a past and a future.

There's only now-ness. There's only this moment. So you have, let's say, you have no past, you have no future, there's only this moment now, and there's nothing to think about.

There's still something there, and that's the essence of who you are, consciousness itself. It cannot be defined. It's neither big, nor small, nor fat, nor thin, nor old, nor young.

Timeless essence has no form. There's nothing much you can say about it, but there's definitely a strong sense of beingness or aliveness that's left when you take that, the rest away. And that's what you take thought away.

You haven't disappeared. In fact, thought wasn't at all who you are. You thought so, but it wasn't.

If you take thought away, you can actually, you touch the essence. You know the

essence. And when I say you know the essence, that's not absolutely correct, because the moment we use words, we create duality.

You know yourself as the essence. You don't know it like a subject and object knowing. I know this, in this world, that through thought there's always the knowing subject and that which is known.

But here, the knower and the known are one. You know yourself to be consciousness. It's not separate.

There isn't a me that says, I am consciousness. There's consciousness. You know yourself as consciousness.

I am that. No separation, no division anymore. And when I put it into words, it sounds almost complicated, because we cannot really verbalize, because it's too simple.

It's not a differentiated state. Everything out here is differentiated. This is undifferentiated state of pure intelligence or pure consciousness.

It's always there to be easy to just touch it in you. It's always underneath the mental noise in everyone. It's there for you, waiting for you, almost one could say.

It's waiting, and it wants to come through you. Just open, open, and it comes through. It doesn't matter if you are a saint or a sinner.

You open, there's a space between two thoughts, and it comes through. What you did in the past is irrelevant, whether you accumulated many spiritual credits by spending 20 years in a monastery, or whether you are stuck in a prison and the opening happens. Spirit doesn't ask, well, are you qualified for me to come through?

It will come through wherever there is an opening. So your personal past doesn't have that much to do with it. The only thing is it got you here to this moment where you realize the possibility of living in a different state of consciousness.

Your past got you here. Well, that's good enough. Whether your past was a successful past or a failure past, whether you built up great things already in your life, or whether you messed your life up completely becomes irrelevant.

So you become free from the past through this, because another dimension comes in. This is why it has happened to some people who were criminals, and at some point suddenly all that subsided, and a space opened up inside them, and the unhappy self suddenly wasn't operating anymore. Now, to some people it comes as a spiritual experience, which means it comes and then after a while they say, oh God, it's gone, I lost it.

Okay, that's the normal thing. Sometimes it comes once and stays forever. You never

lose the connection again with the open space.

But for many people, first it comes and then it leaves them, and they don't realize that they can actually welcome it and encourage it. You don't have to wait for it to come again at some point. Why don't you ask for it to come back?

I'm not saying you ask like, please come back. No, you ask for it to come back by simply walking across the room without thought. Just see if I can walk across the room without needing to be already where I want to get to, the door.

Just be present in every step. Can you be present in each step as you walk across the room? Oh, you're not thinking, you're just present with that.

Can I be present while I look out of the window to check the weather, and can I know what the weather is like without saying something to myself or having some kind of relationship or attitude towards the weather? Can I open the window and say, nothing, just look and know. There's either sunshine or there's rain or whatever it is.

You open the window and there is an awareness that's looking through your eyes. And do you have to say something to yourself then? Do you have to say, oh, it's another dreary day.

I can't take any more of this. Do you have to say that, or is it just an old habit that you've slipped into? Do you have to say, oh, I hope it stays like that today, or whatever, it's going to be too hot, or whatever comment you have, do you need to comment, or can you look out of the window and just know and be the knowing without conceptualization and without like or dislike.

Just allow it to be and know. In the same way you would, I suggest that you can look at your watch and know what time it is without saying to yourself what time it is. So you look out of the window, and for a moment there is a space.

You are the space through which the perception happens. You are not a person. Don't worry, the person is still there on some level, so you're not going to be spaced out for the rest of your life and then walk around, oh, I don't know where I am anymore.

That doesn't happen. But it's a wonderful thing if you realize that you can actually be there as the conscious space for whatever you are looking at. Even at this moment, you're looking at this person, and this person is looking at you.

Can you be the conscious space for the perception, for the looking, rather than be a person that always has some kind of thing to say, like, what's he talking about? That's a thought. I don't understand.

That's a thought. Can you explain more? I don't get it.

Don't believe that thought. The thought says I don't get it, and of course on the level of thought you don't get it, but on another level you get it. You get it by being it.

And so, can you be in your car at the traffic light and just be there as the space for the perception of the red light? It's peaceful. Suddenly the traffic light becomes peaceful.

You are there as you're just seeing. There's the seeing, and there's the space. Why comment on the red light or think about something that's going to happen or might happen or happened in the past or something?

Just be, perceive, and be the space. And then the strange thing is that which you perceive is more alive, and even the traffic light, the red light, has a beauty to it. It sounds very strange, and normally it's only sometimes people who take acid talk about weird things like, when I saw the traffic light, I went, wow.

Now, you don't need to take acid for that, and it may not be a wow, but it may be, wow, that has its own beauty and aliveness, that color. And you're not saying it, you just know it. And so, if you can see the traffic light like that, even more so, that will be the case even more so if you look at the tree that's right next to the traffic light.

It has a presence, it has a beauty, it has an aliveness beyond the concept of tree or the birds that just landed on a branch. An aliveness, a beingness that you then recognize from your own beingness and aliveness that before was obscured by mental noise. Unless you become like little children, because this is something to do with how little children perceive the world before they conceptualize.

Unless you become like little children, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Oh, so that's what it is. But it's an even deeper state than the child state, because the child still has to go through the thinking stage and then come out of it.

The child still has certain things still in common with the dog, not quite, but still no conceptualization, just wonder. And so, that's a gradual practice of choosing to step out of the conceptualizing mind whenever it is unnecessary, which is about, depending on your life activity, 80% of the time, you don't need to think a lot. Thoughts may come and go, but you don't, there's no need to continuously think.

It's become familiar with spaciousness. And then think when it's necessary. And you be empowered then in your thinking becomes actually empowered.

You can actually, if you wanted to create something in this world, this is what some popular books talk about, manifesting your external reality. Of course, you can, through applying focused thinking, you can manifest, but if you're in touch with the spaciousness, the unconditioned consciousness inside, then that comes through and will manifest through you. And then it comes as a sudden knowing that this is what I want to do, but the I that wants to do it, it's not the ego I, it is the deeper I.

So you become aligned with what the universe wants, it's not just what the little me wants. That's the beauty of that. So you can then, you as the greater consciousness, can manifest if you want to.

Don't fall into the trap of believing that something that you manifest is going to bring you fulfilment. It's only on the external level, the fulfilment needs to be there already now. Fulfilment is being in touch with that dimension in yourself before anything happens.

That's where fulfilment lies. The rest is the divine play of form. But the divine wants to play out there.

It wants the manifestation. It wants two things. There are two movements in the universe.

One is the movement into differentiation and into form and into birth, into bodies, into thinking. The universe started from a point of nothingness. That nothingness became one, let's just, it's all not quite right because we can't really talk about it.

Out of the nothingness came the ball or whatever before the Big Bang happened. There was just one point of potentiality for the entire universe. Then at some point the explosion, if we could call it that, out of that was the beginning of the process of differentiation into increasing number of different forms.

And we are still part of that explosion into greater and greater differentiation. But at the same time there is, this is the pull, the outward pull. Then there's the inward pull back to the source, to the timeless source out of which it all came.

And so we as human beings are at a transitional stage where we are becoming strongly aware of the pull back to the source. So there are two movements in the universe. One is out into more and more form and more and more thinking.

It's still there, that movement. There are still many people who believe that the problems of this world can be solved if we just think harder about them, have more committee meetings about the problems of the world and discuss them. And eventually they can be solved.

They don't realize that the problems of the world are there because we have lost touch with the source out of which everything came. So by going into further differentiation we cannot solve the problems, we'll actually increase them. So we need to balance now, return to the source and going out into the world.

It doesn't mean we don't do anything anymore. We can still create and do, but not lose ourselves in creating and doing and thinking. Lose ourselves in the mind, connected with the timeless, formless source of all life within, the space of no thought, connected with

that.

Then we can create, not we as persons, but we as a universal movement of consciousness. Consciousness wants us to be co-creators of the universe, of form. So we can be that, but only if we are connected.

We need conscious connection with the source. So that's the destiny. That's your life purpose.

That's why we are here. And if it sounds complicated to your mind, it's only to the mind. It's not complicated at all.

It's actually very, very simple. It's so simple that you can't think about it. While it's wonderfully still in here, usually in these places you have some background air conditioning sound, but here you just have stillness.

So we can start by noticing that it is still in this room. And of course, the moment you notice that it is still outside, you're still inside. You have to be still for a moment to even notice that there's silence outside.

So it's already a meditation to notice that there is stillness. You can do it in the middle of the night if you wake up. That's usually the most silent time when most people are asleep.

And you simply notice that it is silent in the room or outside, and you cannot notice it by thinking about it. That's the wonderful thing. To notice that it's silent, you have to become silent inside.

So there's already a shift in consciousness. But the simple fact of becoming aware that there's silence around you, you've become silent within, which means for a moment, the stream of thinking has subsided. But you haven't gone to sleep.

You're alert. You're awake. There is a space that has opened up inside you.

And I would say that the silence is part of nature also, because wherever you go in nature, and we'll be talking about that, or there may be sounds. Nature has all kinds of sounds, produces all kinds of sounds, from animals to the wind to the rain to the flowing water and so on. There's always also the deeper dimension of silence.

So if you walk in a forest, for example, you hear all kinds of subtle sounds. But underneath all the subtle sounds in the forest, there is an all-pervasive silence also. Now, if you go into the forest only with your mind, then you will only notice the sounds and what the mind will try to interpret.

Oh, that's such and such a bird. That's that and that's that. It will label.

So that's fine. You might think you're present in the forest, but you're not really. You're simply judging what you hear.

But if you become aware of the silent dimension underneath the sounds and in between the sounds, then you become present, because the moment you become aware of the silence, you also have become silent. The mind has become still. In that moment where you notice, oh, there's silence.

In that moment, not perhaps when you say it, then it's also you're already back in words. But before you say it, so you are able to notice it, that means a space has opened up inside you, a space of awareness, of presence, of no thought, of a shift in consciousness, in fact. It doesn't matter if it only lasted for two seconds.

It was there, a shift. And you can't really remember it. You can't memorize it.

It's not memorable, because in that space of silence, nothing is happening. The silence itself is eventless. All events take place in the silence, but the silence itself or the inner stillness itself is eventless.

And this is why I sometimes say these talks that you listen to are not interesting, because the interesting means mind stuff. What really matters about us being together here is that we enter the deeper dimension together. And that deeper dimension of still presence is not interesting, because it's not differentiated.

You can't say they're not bits and pieces in anything. Oh, look at that. Oh, look at that.

In the same way that the sunset is not interesting or the sunrise. It's too vast. It's too awesome.

You can't say, oh, that's an interesting sunrise. No, you just go, wow. There's nothing.

It's not. It's beyond interesting. It's deeper than interesting.

It's deeper than the mind can analyze. The moment the mind starts analyzing, you have reduced it, and there is a place for that also. But that's not the vastness of being.

There is a place for analysis, but if you're lost in analysis, continuous compulsive judgment and analysis, then, well, life becomes impoverished. You're lost, then, in the mind. So you have to be able to use the power of analysis of the mind, yes, but not be used by it.

And then you can have thoughts. Of course you have thoughts. You're not going to be totally free of thoughts.

But the important thing is you then have a thought. The thought doesn't have you, because it's terrible to be had by a thought. And so that the whole subject matter of our

gathering is to connect more deeply with yourself.

And we may be talking about nature, but really we're talking about yourself, to go deeper so that you have a very deep connection with who you are beyond the movement of thought, so that your identity is not derived from the movement of thought any longer. You can still think, but your thoughts are no longer telling you who you are, opinions about who you are, which then translates, of course, also into opinions about other people. And so you can relate more deeply to others when you're present, but first you need to find that depth in yourself.

And we'll see today how nature can help us with that. Once you found the depth within yourself, all your relationships deepen. They have an added dimension.

And you can then see that relationships that do not have the dimension of depth are very surface phenomena. There's no true relationship. It's just two mind-made entities, two minds are bouncing off each other with their opinions and mental positions and so on.

And even if they're talking about something deep, it's unlikely it will be deep, but even if it sounds deep, it won't really be deep because the depth doesn't come from the words. I don't know if each one of you perhaps remember something that I remember. I don't often talk about the past, but I'll just bring it in, just one little memory now because it's relevant to this moment, what we are saying now.

And perhaps you have a similar memory. I have a memory of being 10, 11 and 12 years old and being mostly unhappy as a child because of, I was unhappy at school, didn't like that at all. At home, my parents were usually in conflict, so there was no peace there.

And if there was peace, I knew it was only a brief interval between conflict. So even when there was no conflict for a day or two, I knew it was like walking through a minefield. And so that's the case, of course, with perhaps some of you had a similar experience.

And there's nobody to blame, it's just people act according to their conditioning and level of consciousness. Nobody can act beyond their level of consciousness, so you can't really blame anybody. Of course, they suffer their consequences, yes, but that's another matter.

So, I was basically an unhappy child, but I was given a bicycle at the age of 10, and we lived in a city, but it was only a short bike ride, 15 minutes or so out of the city. And that was my salvation. And I would quite often, occasionally even, I just didn't go to school.

I just said, goodbye, I'm going to school, and then I went off into the country. And then I reached the outskirts of the city, not particularly overpowering landscape of exceptional beauty, just ordinary, some wheat fields, occasionally groups of trees, groves, hedges,

but it was nature. And I would slow down on my bike, and very slowly, and start to look.

I looked at, and I listened to the wind, and the leaves, and birds, and I slowed down. And then every time I did that, I was shedding a burden, and a sentence would repeat itself in my mind, and it's a strange thing. I didn't know why, I didn't even question why I thought this particular sentence, and that sentence was, this will always be here.

And this kept repeating itself, this will always be here, this will always be here. Years later, I remember that I realized that sentence must have meant, that I must have realized that there's the man-made dimension, and there is nature. And nature compared to the man-made world is virtually timeless.

There's a, the time spans in nature are virtually infinite compared to the short-lived man-made things. So what I actually experienced at that time was transcendence through nature, transcendence of my personal condition, the narrow suffering condition. So nature enabled me to experience that, the transcendence of a different dimension that is beyond the man-made world.

And perhaps some of you have similar memories when you were a child, how you related to nature, or how nature helped you or gave you a sense of support. And I believe there aren't many children nowadays that are actually deprived of that, unfortunately, because they are so captivated by their electronic gadgets and computer screens and so on that their main attention is in this world of little screens. So it's important for every parent to encourage children to experience nature, vitally important for their well-being, as it is for every human being too, for every adult.

Now, there may be one or two people being with us here, there, who perhaps are stuck somewhere in a room and can't get out because of physical disability, or they may be in prison, and they say, what can I do? What can we do? We can't get out into nature.

Well, you need to remember that your body also is nature, so you can start there. Every time you take a breath, that's nature. Nature is breathing.

The air that you're breathing is nature. The very fact of breathing is a natural process. It's not choice.

It's done for you. It's not so much that you breathe, although we say, I breathe, but you're not the body breathing, so it's a natural thing that happens. You wouldn't say, I'm beating my heart.

You don't do that, but that's the same thing. The body does it. It's a natural process.

For some reason, we say, I'm breathing because breathing is semi-voluntary. You can stop it for a while, but not for that long, because if you stop it for too long, nature takes over. So, you live with nature, with your body.

So, even if you can't get out, you can start by being aware of that level of yourself, the physical level, the natural part of who you are, the body, and not just by saying, okay, I'm looking at my hands or my feet, not just the physics, not the external image of the body, but you can go into the body with your attention, and that's, you're in nature. Even if you're in a present cell, you can do that, and even if there's no opportunity, you might be in an office block in Manhattan, and you look out of the window, and all you have is maybe a little bit of sky. Okay, there's a little bit of nature there.

You can look at that, but you have more nature than that in yourself. So, as you sat in your office, wherever it is, go within first, be conscious that breathing is happening. The body is breathing.

Be conscious also of the preciousness of the air. It's such a precious substance. So, to acknowledge that is actually part of what sometimes is called to live in a state of gratitude.

Now, some people say, what can I be grateful for? There's nothing in my life that I can be grateful for. Well, are you breathing?

Yes. Well, you start there. If you start being grateful for the tiniest things, then gradually that expands, and that shift in consciousness of honoring life, no matter how small it is, the manifestation of life as yourself.

By honoring that, gratitude arises, and a totally different state of consciousness then brings about good things. But you have to start with the good that is already there. There's not enough good in my life, people say.

I need more good. Life hasn't given me what I needed. Start with what you have, and the most obvious thing to start with is, I'm breathing.

And it's something very beautiful to feel that you are absorbing this energy that is air, that then merges with your being. It's an amazing thing to honor the process of breath, to honor the fact that you are breathing. You can start with that.

That is being, becoming, honoring the present moment. If you're looking for the present moment, which is, of course, all there ever is. Some people write it in *The Power of Now* and were surprised.

And they're still surprised when I say the present moment is all there ever is in your life. There's nothing, there is no past and future in your experience except when you think about it, but not in your actual experience. Oh, well, yes, it's actually true.

The greatest philosopher could come and he could not argue with the fact that you only ever experience the present moment, there is nothing else. The mind asks, well, where is the present moment? Well, start with your breath.

That will always take you into the present moment because you're breathing now. And you're only ever taking one breath, this one. All other breaths you either remember or anticipate mentally.

And it's actually said that the Buddha recommended this as a meditation, maybe even before the Buddha, but the Buddha certainly recommended that people should be aware of their breath as a meditation. He didn't say, as far as I know, that that will take you into the present moment. And he didn't say that will actually stop your mind, too.

He just said, be aware of your breath. And so breath awareness meditation has become a Buddhist meditation that's practiced. But the dangerous thing is with practitioners of meditation is they make it into something to be achieved through it.

They want to become good at it. You can't become good at one breath. This is just one breath.

So there's nature and there's the present moment. Here, now, here. Oh, and I thought there was nothing to be grateful for.

I'm breathing, or breathing is happening. And then as you become aware of that, you're beginning to feel that your body is also alive on the inside, to feel that there's an energy that is pervading the entire body. That's nature, and it's very close.

You can't get to a tree that close as you can to your body or anything else. So really, the closest you can ever get to nature is there in yourself as the physical body. But when you become aware, now, this is something for each one of us to do right now, not to do, but to notice.

There's no doing as such because we don't have to do anything. You can do, sometimes it helps to move about, to get a little bit of sense that your body is alive. It can help.

But you can see there's, the body is alive. Can I feel that? Yes, the breath is happening and there's aliveness in my feet, my hands, my legs.

Very subtle at first, but it's there. And there's nature, and that's already a deeper level than what you see. Out in nature, when you look at a tree, you can't, to get deeper than the image of the tree, you have to have gone deeper within yourself so that you can sense the aliveness of the tree.

You cannot sense the aliveness of the tree unless you can sense the aliveness in yourself. If you don't sense the aliveness in yourself, you're only approaching the tree with your mind and your mind might say, oh, that's a nice tree. But you're missing the depths of it.

You're missing the fact that there's more here than what the mind tells you there's here.

When the mind says there's a tree or a flower or whatever it is, what you're looking at and call a tree and then believe that the word that you have attached to it actually describes its reality, no, it's a label, it's an abstraction that you put onto this thing that you cannot really understand. It's a vitally alive, mysterious being with great depths.

It's as much depth as you because all forms, all life forms are connected and come out of the one source of life. So you're beginning to go to feel that when you feel the aliveness of the inner body. It's not quite the deepest source yet, but you're going towards the non-physical, the life energy that comes from the source.

So connecting with yourself through breath and feeling the inner body is part of connecting with nature. Often people only notice nature when there's something unusual happening, for example, a thunderstorm. You cannot help notice that.

Suddenly there's a flash of lightning or you go to a place where there's a tornado happening. Of course, then you notice nature or you go out into alpine regions, high mountains, overpowering. You're climbing up mountains and suddenly you hear, as I remember a few years ago in Switzerland, I was walking and suddenly you hear a huge, like a cannon being fired.

And there were chunks breaking off the glacier. And of course, that is such an overpowering thing. It stops you and you go, wow, is it coming this way?

But most of the time, nature is more subtle than that. And so to notice the nature in its subtle aspect, which is always there, now that requires you to have a certain degree of alertness, attention, alertness is required. You have to, in other words, if you are totally immersed in the thinking mind, you miss the whole thing.

And even sometimes I walk in the forest quite often. I see people walking, some are wearing noise machines. It's as if the noise machine that they have in their head anyway were not enough.

They put speakers onto their ears so that they don't hear nature, don't hear anything natural, just hear. And even those who don't have these things on their ears, whatever they are these days, technology changes so quickly I no longer know what they're called. I can't catch up.

It's no longer CDs, so at least this is old-fashioned. It's other things now, digital. Even if they don't have that, often I can see two friends walking in the forest and they're talking to each other, animators, nothing wrong with talking to each other, but they don't, 98% of what's around them they don't notice.

Occasionally they say, oh, look at that, and then, okay, let's talk about something more important. And even people walking alone, often they're not really there. They are partly there, but a lot of their attention is still in their thoughts.

And even if they are looking and saying, oh, this is, they're exclusively there as the judgmental mind, the interpreting mind, not yet as presence. But nature offers such a wonderful opportunity to enter the state of presence, which is a state of spacious awareness of just that. There's no conceptualizing thought happening, just spacious, aware presence, the most miraculous state for human beings to be in, the next stage in human evolution.

Nature offers you that opportunity more than anything that is man-made, because everything that is man-made has been made with, to a greater or lesser extent, the mind has come in and transformed nature into something that still is, if you trace it back, everything goes back to nature. Even a piece of plastic cannot be made without something natural to start with, which then the mind transforms. And even a car, everything in the car, if you trace it back where it comes from, of course it comes from nature originally.

But in the intervening time period, the human mind has transformed it into something else, and there's nothing wrong with that, except that the man-made things are not as suitable for going deeper and experiencing the state of presence than things that have not been made through thinking, that came spontaneously out of the one consciousness out of which everything comes, produced by the one life, the one underlying intelligence field.

Everything has come out of that, and there is no thinking that goes into the, when nature manufactures a flower, look at that, it doesn't say, let's have a committee meeting and draw up a blueprint and talk about what shape should it be, let's put into the computer the proportions of it and work it all out, it gets very complicated. And they could never manufacture something like that, the subtleness of it, the incredible delicacy of it. So this, yes, of course this has incredible harmony and beauty, but no conceptual thinking has gone into its making, it's not, an intelligence has created that it must have, but this is not analytical thought, has not created that.

And this is why the flower then is more suitable for entering the state of no thought, of pure presence, than, for example, this clock. Because the moment I look at this clock, the mind says, oh, it's such and such a time, and it's nothing wrong with clocks, I like ticking clocks, but, and once you are firmly rooted in presence, you can look at anything and be free of thinking, and you can see the beauty even in a clock or a car and say, wow, oh, it's just, but to, as a help, nature is much more helpful because nature exists in prior to thought, we could say, evolutionary scale. I could have held this flower up and stopped speaking, and the Buddha's silent sermon 2,600 years ago, people still remember it, he sat there and he was going to speak and then suddenly he saw this flower and he took this flower and looked at it for how long, nobody knows, but it must have gone on for a long time and everybody got restless. It's called the Buddha's silent sermon.

And then after half an hour or one hour, we don't know, because they didn't have clocks then, one of the, because they were all monks at that time, other people didn't have access to anything, to spiritual teachings. I talk about that in the New Earth at the beginning. One of the monks, all the other monks looked puzzled, what's he trying to do, what's he saying?

And one monk suddenly started to smile, and the story goes that he was the only one that understood that sermon of the Buddha, the one who smiled. And this smile was, according to the story or the legend or the scriptures, the smile was passed on from generation to generation of teacher and pupil. So he became a teacher, that monk, and they say he passed on the smile, which really means the realization, to the next and the next and the next, and after six or seven or whatever generations, it became the origin of Zen.

That's how the story goes. So what is it then that he smiled about? Well, let's not conceptualize it.

I think you will realize it for yourself as we progress here. Are we then returning, when we go into nature, are we then returning to the level that trees live at, or flowers, or minerals, or birds, whatever it is? Is it an act of return to a primordial stage of being?

Not quite. We join whatever natural thing it is that we are perceiving, we join it in the state of no thought. But when we go there, we've gone through thought already.

We rise above thought. The flower exists below thought. And then we meet in the dimension of no thought.

But at a very deep level, we do not become the flower or the cabbage. Well, if you had a choice, you'd probably rather be a flower than a cabbage, but cabbage is beautiful too. We are not regressing.

Cabbage is fine for the cabbage, but not for us. The cabbage is totally at ease with itself, one with a source, doesn't inhabit a world of problems, doesn't generate conflict. The cabbage is rooted in being.

So is the tree. So is the flower. And even the dog, well, most of them, and the cat, except those who have lived for too long with neurotic humans, they are rooted in being.

And this is why people love dogs and cats. There's actually a deep reason, a deep meaning to that. Because they can sense that the dog or the cat is more deeply rooted in being, is more at rest within him or herself than the human.

The human has gone out very far from the source into further and further differentiation. Everything originates from the one source of all life, the unmanifested, formless, timeless, one source. Everything then comes out of that source.

And humans are a product, a very differentiated product, gone out a long way from the source, a little bit like the prodigal son in the New Testament who leaves the father's home and squanders his wealth and becomes destitute. He's left the source. He's gone so far out that he becomes destitute.

He doesn't remember his origins anymore. So the dog, and even less so the flower or the tree, they haven't gone out that far, so to speak, from the source. There's still more of a connection with their origin.

And this is also why they are not fearful of death. They don't think about, oh, I'm going to die. And when an animal dies, an animal is very accepting.

It surrenders into that. It doesn't make a problem out of living, and it doesn't make a problem out of dying. It doesn't live on the level of problem-making, which is a level when you lose your sense of connectedness with the source, and this is because you identified with the thinking mind, then a world of problems arises.

You create a world of, that's what you manifest then, and that's what you end up with on this planet, on this beautiful planet which is paradise. You end up with layers and layers of complexity and increasing problems. Oh, my God, it's all getting so complicated.

It's just survival is getting complicated, very complicated. So really now when we talk about nature exists closer to the source, we have gone out very far, and for us it's not a return to the original level where the animal lives or the tree lives. It's a transcendence where you regain awareness of the source of being with full consciousness rather than as a natural state and you don't really know.

The dog doesn't know that the dog is one with being. He just is one with being. The tree doesn't know.

If you tell a tree, are you one with being? If a tree could understand you, of course, which it doesn't, it doesn't have conception. Are you one with being?

I don't know. But if you look at nature, everything exists in its, it's so much, so at rest within itself. It has so much integrity.

Everything natural has such integrity. Integrity, the word originally means being one with yourself, not having split yourself into two or three. For example, when you say, me and my life, the tree doesn't say me and my life, my difficult life.

The tree is life, an expression of life. The human says, I have a hard life. And the hard life that the human says he or she has is a mental construct because it has no real reality except as a movement of thought because the only real life that you have is at this moment, ever, always.

This is your life now. I'm sitting here, breathing, perceiving this aware presence. This is life.

This is your life. The rest is memories or anticipatory thinking. So the dog doesn't have a life.

The dog is an unproblematic expression of life. So is everything in nature. It is life manifesting, the one timeless, sacred, the one, deep down, the one formless life becoming form as millions of life forms coming out from.

They say with the Big Bang it all started. Who knows? Before the Big Bang there was nothing.

Nobody understands that because you can't understand nothing. No thing, no form, no time. Out of that void, which is also the fullness of infinite potential, came the forms.

More and more differentiated over millions and millions of years. And then finally it becomes the human mind, the most differentiated as far as we can see. There may be others even more mad somewhere else in the universe.

Continuously thinking and analyzing and evaluating. And then the entity that has to carry that mind is completely out of touch with the source. Not only you're not cut off from the original source, the original oneness, you just don't know it's there.

And so that's it. That's the state of being lost. Lost in your mind, lost in the world, split yourself in two or three, having a life that you don't like, me and my life, me and my story, my sad story.

And then life is perceived no longer as a joyful expression of the underlying oneness, but becomes a burden. It gets heavier and heavier. And so this has happened to humanity.

Humanity is, this species is at a critical stage now. There's a possibility of a shift into a deeper state, or a higher state if you want to call it that, of transcending conceptual thinking, going beyond. And that's what we're going to talk about in a moment.

You can still think, but no longer trapped in thinking. This is where humanity has to go. And as you transcend conceptual thinking, you regain what was lost eons, eons ago.

You regain your sense of connectedness with being. You feel deep down you're connected with something vast, and it's not different from who you are. It just, when we put it into language, it sounds as if that was something different from who you are.

You're connected with being, with a sense of simple beingness. Being is, comes from the word to be, to be the most primordial thing. And everything in nature is an expression of that underlying beingness, and including the physical body.

This body, this body. All that we perceive in this world is existence. Exists, it exists.

This body exists. This body exists. Underlying existence is being.

Being is the formless, timeless dimension within yourself. It's very much like the black hole at the center of the galaxy. When I was writing *The Power of Now*, I wrote, I don't know why I wrote that, it just came to me one day.

I wrote, there is a black hole at the center of every galaxy. And the editor saw it and said, you can't say that because you don't, how can you know that? The people are going to argue with that.

So it was taken out. And some years later I read, I read an article by a scientist and said, now scientists believe that there is a black hole at the center of every galaxy. And so, why did I know that?

I knew that because I could feel the black hole inside myself. This spacious, formless, one life. The origin.

And so, and I know that the human being is a microcosm. It's just, you can understand the whole universe by understanding yourself. You are just a microscopic version of that.

So that's the, we are regaining by no longer being lost in the conceptualizing mind. We regain something that was lost a long, long time ago. Very much like the prodigal son in the New Testament.

Your origin. Not your origin in, you can't say, it's not really your origin in time. It's not saying, okay, my origin was six billion years ago.

That's where I started. When the Big Bang happened, that was the beginning of me. That's true, of course.

That was the beginning. But it's not so much that the origin is in the distant past, or not even in the near past. The origin is timeless.

The origin of your being. It is still there. This primordial nothingness, nothingness before the Big Bang is still in you now.

Nature can help you rediscover that. If you approach it, not with the conceptualizing mind, but you approach nature and perceive nature in a state of alert attention, spaciousness. And that's a wonderful, wonderful, first we could call it a practice, but then it's no longer a practice.

It becomes a natural way of being. First in nature, and then even in the man-made world. But we need to first of all be able to, we are going into it now, do it in the forest, or on the beach, or in the field, wherever it is, before you can be in that state in the shopping

mall, where everything, it's not so, being, you can't really find being that easily.

You have to be rooted very deeply in yourself to find being in the shopping mall, because everything is surface phenomena. Buy me, do this, do this, eat a hamburger. Look here, look here, and then after 20 minutes in the shopping mall, you're totally exhausted because all the energy is flowing out of your eyes into phenomena.

And music is in the background, not the most profound music. And yet you could be walking in the forest for three hours and not feel exhausted, in fact, feel invigorated. Isn't that strange?

So the shopping mall takes it out of you, and the forest, or whatever, or the beach, or the desert puts it back. There's something there that's very, very different, but not for everybody. There needs to be the openness and the alertness so that all the seemingly insignificant things in nature, you are alert to that.

And that, for example, you're looking at, you're walking a tree, a slight movement of leaves in the breeze, perhaps a sound associated with it. Your senses are alert, not strained, there's no tension, you don't go... No, just alert.

In that alertness, of course, there's no thought anymore, because if you were thinking you would not be alert. Thought is not alert, it's a lower state. Alertness is a higher state than thought, higher consciousness than thought.

But good thoughts, which means creative thoughts, original thoughts, original insights, can only come out of the alertness. You need to have the alertness and then sometimes thought becomes fruitful and original and creative out of that. But if you never touch the alertness, then thought is repetitive.

Old records, CDs, not records anymore, and not CDs anymore, old iPods or whatever. So, nature then, you have to approach nature with that alertness, attentiveness, like a little child, as if you had come there for the first time, into that place. Let's say, maybe you drive somewhere, or it's close to where you live, you get out of the car, out of your door.

For most people, even wherever you live, there will be something natural when you step out of your house somewhere. Even if you live downtown, there may be a little tree somewhere. Not acknowledged by most people, almost everybody walks past it without looking, because they have more important things to think about.

But you, for a moment, you acknowledge that. Not by saying, oh, I should be acknowledging the tree. You just acknowledge, you give it attention.

And in that moment, you notice little things about it that before you didn't notice, how the quivering leaves, how the light shines through the branches or the leaves, how the light interacts with the tree. And you notice all these things without having to call it

anything. It's just a noticing.

And this is a practice. You can practice that as a choice, because you choose to relate to nature in a different way. And when you do that, then nature gives you something back.

What it gives you back is some of that energy of connectedness with the source that the tree is still in. This energy comes back to you. The tree gives you that back.

It says, have some of this. I have more than enough. So it helps you to feel that connectedness.

But you are also helping the tree. I'm saying that intuitively. The tree hasn't spoken to me like that.

Maybe some trees speak to some people, but not to me. Well, Prince Charles, years ago, said he talked to the plants. And that's, of course, a wonderful thing.

And I think he not only, he meant he not only talked to the plants, I think he meant he gives them his full attention. And ever since the newspapers have been making fun of him. Because they don't understand.

It's just the mind doesn't want to understand that. So you're giving it attention. It's not just that the tree, and I'm only using tree as an example.

It could be a tree. It could be a flower. It could be an entire forest.

As, because the attention that you give, you can give to either a single natural phenomenon, or being, like a tree, or a flower, or even a blade of grass, or a little plant, whatever it may be. You can also give attention to a more inclusive energy field, like an entire valley. That is, it has its own energy field, its own, its own spirit almost, one could say.

Or a forest as you walk. So there are two modalities, one could say, of being there in, let's say it's a forest. You can notice single things, like trees or plants, and for a moment you give them some, give them attention.

There's a looking in alertness. And then you look at something else. And there's no choice really involved in not saying, okay, what can I look at now?

It happens naturally. Your eyes, you'd look at this, and then suddenly you look at something else. And then you look, you take in the totality of what's there, just a general, without always necessarily focusing on one thing, you take in the totality.

And that is, there's an expression in Zen which is translated as a choiceless awareness, an expression that also I believe Krishnamurti used. Choiceless awareness of, so you take in the totality of what is around you. And then the entire energy field of what's

around you then connects with you, and you connect with it.

So it gives you what some of that connectedness with a source that nature never lost almost transmits itself to you. But it's a reciprocal process. What you give nature is the awareness of itself.

Because we need to remember that nature, it's not that you are separate from nature, you haven't been put into nature, you have come out of nature, you are nature also. You are nature that is in the process of becoming conscious of itself. And so what you then give back to the tree or the flower or the forest is awareness of itself.

It recognizes, because this flower, I would say it does not know it is beautiful, it just is. The flower is. Its beauty is there, it comes from the source.

And now when any human perceives this flower as a true act of perception, not conceptualizing it or judging it, but something responds from within. Something is touched within. There's such beauty there, but even to call it beauty, you don't need that.

There's something there, something within responds, almost a recognition. And when you perceive in such a way, you realize that you and it are not separate. The illusion of separation which is created by the thinking mind disappears.

And there's a sense of oneness. When you are not calling it anything, this pure spacious perception, immediately there's not me and the flower. There's a continuum.

The flower arises within the field of consciousness. It comes out of that. And so this is really what love is.

You love the flower because you recognize it as ultimately one with who you also are. You're connected to the source. Through the flower you can connect to the source, but you feel it within yourself.

It's an amazing thing. Allow nature to take you back by choiceless awareness, presence. You can allow nature to take you back to the source, but as it takes you back to the source, you are going to the source with the awareness, full awareness of the beauty, of the sacredness, of whatever you want to call it, full awareness.

And then suddenly you have a love of nature and a deep empathy with nature that even the people who lived before the human mind developed into the monster that it has become now. There were people who lived close to the land, close to nature. That was a natural oneness.

They didn't even know it because there was nothing else. So natural, simple people who lived close to nature, they didn't know the preciousness of nature because you can only

know the preciousness when you're beginning to lose it. Then it becomes precious.

When there is nothing else, then it's just what is. In the same way, if the entire world were painted green, the color green would not exist. You wouldn't know it.

So this is having lost, which seems like a tragedy on the one hand, that we lost connectedness. Well, we didn't lose it, but it's forgot our connectedness with being or with the source became obscured. We almost, we could say we lost it.

And it seems a tragedy, but it's not really, because it, I believe it was a necessary cycle in the evolution of humanity, because it's only by losing it that you then regain it at a deeper level and a new level is reached. And that is why we are here. That's the process.

But your practice then needs to be bring your gift to nature. Nature has a lot to give you, but it only can do that if you bring your gift to nature. And that is, that gift is consciousness, awareness.

You are there when you go anywhere in nature or even in the city street, there will be something, whether it's, it can be the clouds, it can be even be aware of the sun, the sunlight, that's nature too. Acknowledge all these things with your awareness, by bringing awareness to it. And that looks like I can only, one can only say that much about awareness.

It needs to be experienced. And what I mean by awareness, you can never understand unless at least for a moment you become aware. I could be speaking for weeks about awareness or presence here and you would not know, conceptually you might know everything about it then.

You could write a PhD about awareness or presence without ever having, knowing what it really is. So, let me just demonstrate very simply what awareness is. It's just senses are alert, visual.

Even if there's nothing to hear, you can still have an alertness, auditory alertness. And you know what happened, I talked about it at the beginning, the mind becomes still. When you have nothing to hear, there's nothing beautiful, there's just what raises awareness.

To become aware of what awareness is in yourself is the key. Nature can help you there and speed up this process. So, but the vital, you don't need anything beyond this moment.

You have nature, I said, and you carry it around with yourself, in yourself as this physical form. Awareness is the key. Sometimes it's called attention in some teachings, doesn't matter.

You remember the Zen teacher who would always say when they asked, please explain the meaning of Zen, he would always go like that. And that was the explanation. Another Zen story, the disciple said to the master, I'm going off somewhere else now, can you just write something down for me so that I remember the essence of the teaching?

Obviously, he didn't have it yet, otherwise he wouldn't have asked. He still thought it was something memorable. So the teacher wrote on a little piece of paper or whatever they had, attention.

And the disciple looks and says, okay, can you just say a little bit more, please? I need a little bit more. And so the master writes something else.

And the disciple looks and reads, attention, attention. Oh, well, he said, I want it just a little bit more. Just, can you just write something else?

And then the master writes, and the disciple reads, attention, attention, attention. So the disciple becomes a little bit frustrated. And well, I know that now, the disciple says, what does attention mean anyway?

And the master says, attention means attention. That's the end of the story. Whether he got it or not, we don't know.

This attention is the vital thing, and there is no tension in attention. It just happens to be a similar word. So if it's, there's no straining, there's no, it's not concentration.

Concentration is just focusing on one thing, and there's always some straining involved with it. It goes, attention, it facially looks like. So that's not it.

There's a little bit of the, the very young child, if you can, that, in true attention, there's a little bit of the openness of a very young child in whom the conceptualizing mind hasn't started up yet. Before the child starts asking the question, what's this called? What's that?

What's that? And before they start asking, why? Why?

Why? Before all that, of course, they have to go through that stage. But before that, there's a moment when there's already consciousness beginning to blossom, but not yet taking form as thought.

So there's a short period where the child is in that state of open attention with light shining through their eyes, and then they go. What we are then really talking about is the cessation of thinking, of having to think. Not forever, thinking still happens, but there's actually the choice not to think when there's nothing to think about, which is a lot of the time.

A lot of the time, nothing is added to this moment by thinking about it. The depths, the

fullness of life now, you cannot add really anything to it by thinking. Some situations require thinking, that's fine.

Many situations don't require thinking, that's even better. And if you have to think prior to thinking, enter the state of attention or no thought just for a moment, and you will see the quality of thinking improves, the thinking that you then do or that then happens. But to have spaces of not thinking, that's what nature offers you, otherwise you're not really using the vastness of its wealth, nature, when you are thinking about it.

The vastness of that is only accessible to you when there is the spaciousness of not thinking. It doesn't matter for how long you don't think, don't try to stop your mind as such, because that creates a conflict in yourself, and you would perhaps try to exercise willpower, and you may have limited success if you go out into nature and say, I mustn't think. And you'll probably stop breathing too.

So there's no, there's no, no willpower that can't do that. One way of not thinking naturally is, yes, bringing attention to sense perceptions can be very helpful there. Just bring attention to sense perceptions.

Then there won't be enough attention left for thinking. If you're fully attentive with your senses, there's not attention, not enough consciousness left for producing thoughts. Just you're too alert.

That's a simple thing. Another one that is, you can do in daily life and not just in nature, is work with the present moment, and accepting what is now. Whatever form this moment takes, you say, fine, this is what is.

And then you will think much less. A lot of thinking is there because you're trying to get away from what is. So if you can become friendly with the present moment, you become more relaxed, open to life, and naturally the compulsive thinking mind subsides because there's only ever the simplicity of now, of this moment.

So that's a, you can do it in nature more easily than in the office, of course. You can do it in nature more easily than in the shopping mall. You can perhaps do it more easily when you're alone in nature than when you're with a friend in nature, because two people together, most people think, okay, what can we talk about now?

Let's talk about the stock market.

[Speaker 4] (4:14:16 - 4:14:16)

Okay.

[Speaker 1] (4:14:18 - 5:23:58)

So it's probably easier alone than visiting your family. Visiting people with whom you

share a lot of past. To then to remain clear, present, requires more intense presence.

So nature then is a good place to start being present. And then you, a wonderful thing happens then as your, as presence deepens, you can bring your presence anywhere you go. Even visiting your relatives.

Or even the shopping mall, not that you might choose to spend more time than necessary at the shopping mall, because the compulsion to acquire, which is a substitute for a feeling of aliveness, will have left you. So the compulsion, what can I get now? Why this compulsion to buy things you don't really need?

Because for a moment you get a sense of aliveness, and that moment is quite short. It's when you pay for, when you pay for the stuff and then they put it in the shiny bag and then you say, there you are. Oh.

And then you walk home and there is the bag and then you take it out and then the sense of fulfillment quickly leaves you. And then so that this means of course another visit to the shopping mall is required. And so why that?

Because for a moment you feel there's a sense of lack in most humans that comes from disconnectedness from this. They cannot sense the being within them. They cannot sense that the aliveness, the being that they are.

They cannot sense the I am, the primordial sense of beingness. They're disconnected from that. They're up in the head and the head says, I need, and now I need, what else do I need?

I need this and I need that and I need that. Where can I go? Look, maybe that will do it or that.

Oh, I need another meal. I need another chocolate cake. Whatever, on whatever level the neediness manifests, it will be there.

I need another relationship. I knew somebody who had enough money and he bought one car, a very expensive car and there's nothing wrong with that. It's fine if you enjoy a car.

But very quickly he found it didn't have, it didn't fulfill him the way he thought it would. And so I think that was a, what was it, Aston Martin or Bentley or something. And then he bought a Ferrari and then for a while that was, yeah, that's it.

And then that wore off also and then he bought another one. They had three cars standing there and he said, oh, that's a piece of garbage. It's a piece of garbage.

See, it wasn't fulfilling anymore. And so that really is whatever, all these are substitutes. And of course, unfortunately, if the whole economic structure that we, well, it's a little bit

shaky now, which is probably a good thing, but the whole economic structure can survive only if enough people still live in that neediness to consume.

If not enough people consume, they say this is very bad, the economy is going downhill fast, people are not consuming anymore. Of course you will. So what I'm talking about is the neediness, the neediness to have substitute fulfillment then goes.

So we create a different, very different society, very different world is then created. Of course, the transition will be a little bit painful for some people. But the more you are surrendered to life, to the present moment, the easier it will be.

So nature then is the, can be for many people, the entry into the state of being, connectedness with being, because nature is really being. Through every form of life, being speaks, not through words, being communicates itself to you through every natural form. And within yourself also through existence is the forms of life, existence, billions, billions of life forms.

Underlying the billions of life forms is the one life. So you are that, I am an expression of the one life, a temporary expression of the one timeless life. Can you sense, that question is, can you sense the one timeless life within yourself as consciousness?

Can you, at this moment, can you feel your own presence, your own awareness? These words are not quite right, it's not yours, nothing is yours. But let's just for a moment put it like that just to get you there.

Can you feel, can you feel your own presence, which don't mean you're thinking, I don't mean your feelings, they may be there, but underneath it, isn't there, isn't there a presence that perceives this moment as in whatever form it arises at this moment? Isn't there an underlying light, isn't there an underlying space in which all this arises? Even if it's all a dream, it might all be a dream, but even then, if it is a dream, there's no point in arguing whether it's a dream or not, isn't there an underlying space in which the dream arises?

Somebody's having this dream, who is that somebody? You. But not you as the person, the person is part of the dream, if it is a dream.

Well, it's dreamlike, that's for sure, because everything passes very quickly, it certainly is dreamlike, our existence is dreamlike, no doubt about that, but who is having this dreamlike thing? To whom is it happening? To me, who are you?

You can't attach a name to it, you are consciousness, the essence. So when I say, can you feel your own presence, another way of putting it is, can you be aware that you are aware at this moment, aware of your own awareness, aware of awareness, self-awareness, self-realization? You don't need to think, there's nothing to understand in it, nothing to understand, just that.

Yeah, that's the transcendent dimension in you, it transcends everything. Transcend means it's beyond. As it says in the Buddhist scripture, something like, what is it, gate, gate, paragate, beyond, beyond, gone to the farthest shore, gone beyond.

And this is not some extraordinary state reserved for one person in a billion, it's a natural state, because we had lost it for so long, it just seems so extraordinary. It's the most wonderful thing if you can go into any situation as that clear space, not as a person. The person is there for a while, you can still bring the person out of the cupboard when you want it.

If people ask me, what do you do, or whatever, usually I say something, I'm a writer, okay, that doesn't create any problems. I don't, I'm not saying, I am formless consciousness and I was never born, and that would lead to problems. So you can pretend that you are a person and then give a clear answer, and that's fine, and still know that that's not the truth at all, not that you're lying, but it's a tiny, tiny temporary aspect, and still be there as a spacious presence in any situation, doesn't matter where anymore, just spacious presence.

And a lot of the time, don't need to think, just be there as a presence, and you are truly, that's true intelligence coming into this world. Real intelligence is not what the IQ test measures in you. I'm incapable of doing IQ tests, I mean, I've never done one, but I just looked, glanced at one, and I know my IQ would be very low.

My mind doesn't work in that way, it doesn't work analytically, and so, that is only a tiny aspect, it's not, this is not true intelligence, and I'm not saying that because my IQ test would be low, it's not, nor should it be an insult to anybody who has a high IQ, and I'm now removing their sense of identity by saying it doesn't matter that much whether your IQ is high or low, it's not that, but there's a true, the true intelligence is the unconditioned consciousness.

The thinking mind is the conditioned consciousness, conditioned by the past, conditioned by innumerable factors, conditioned by the language that you inherit. There's past in every word that you inherit. The moment you start speaking a language, you inherit an entire world view that's associated with that language, an entire energy that comes with the language that you're born into, and then that becomes part of who you think you are, your identity.

It's not, it's a temporary acquisition, it's a form of conditioning, and then people are, I'm English, German, Italian, Greek, whatever, it's nothing to do with who they are, it's a form of conditioning. So, and then there is the unconditioned underneath it, spacious awareness, unconditioned, and everybody, it's in everybody, you just stop thinking for a moment and there it is. And the mind says, oh, that can't be that insignificant because there was nothing happening just now.

And then you don't need to desensitize yourself anymore and all the other substitutes that you may have for a sense of aliveness, whatever drugs people use to feel more alive for a little while, relationships, they need to change relationships quickly because quickly the novelty wears out and then, okay, maybe somebody else will finally make me happy and do it for me. Maybe he's right here, or she. And there's nothing wrong with any of these things, buying something or even enjoying a drink or whatever, but the compulsive nature, then, is no longer there.

You don't need substitute aliveness. Another one, of course, is drama in relation, you need the drama to have, to feel, we are still alive. We haven't been fighting in one month, something must be wrong.

Even with your dog or cat, if you have a dog or cat, approach them as much as possible, not through language, of course, sometimes you speak, but approach them just bringing also awareness, just look, watch your dog or cat, how he runs around or rests or eats or sleeps, and just bring aware presence, look into their eyes, connect with the, because there's so much being coming through them, through their eyes, and that's why people are drawn to dogs or cats, they love them, and even people with big egos, they sometimes, when they see a dog, they go, oh, for a moment the ego subsides, for a moment they look into the eyes of the dog and they feel a little bit more themselves even, more, oh, and again, it's the being that speaks through this little animal, more connected than the master, than the owner, the being of the dog, and this is what people relate to in the animal, this is why they spend so much money on their animals, because it gives them a glimpse of being, of that connectedness, but it's a secondary thing, but if you can be, the dog can help you if you bring, always realize it's in you, you feel that in yourself when you relate to the dog or the cat, it's not in the dog, it's also in the dog or cat, but it is primarily felt here. Thank you.

Thank you. Let's talk about meditation today and whatever else arises out of that, you never know beforehand. Meditation, as you may know, I don't teach meditation as such, not so much as a separate practice.

Presence practice, bringing presence into everyday life, is meditation, but there's also something to be said for having a structured practice every day, and it may not be right or absolutely necessary for everybody, but many people will find structured meditation every day helpful. The thing is, I've come across many meditators who are extremely accomplished, have been practicing meditation, structured meditation for 20 or 30 years, and still they find that no matter what states of consciousness they achieve or enter into in their structured meditation, there's still a huge gap between their everyday life and their state of consciousness while they meditate. In other words, they tend to be almost as unconscious as a non-meditator in everyday life.

So there's a gap that can arise in people who practice structured meditation between,

this is my meditation, and then you get on with the rest of your life. Meditation in the morning and the evening, and then they move out of their meditation into the rest of their lives. To exemplify that, there's the example of the meditator, a man who is meditating on metta, a Buddhist meditation called loving-kindness, where you spread loving-kindness out from you, says, goes something like, may I be well and happy, may I be well and happy, may I be well and happy, and as the words are used as pointers so that you emanate peace, you can feel yourself, and then you include the next circle, may everybody in this house be well and happy, may everybody in this city be well and happy, gradually you expand, may everybody in this state be well and happy, in this country, the entire planet.

So it's quite a beautiful meditation. Anyway, this man then was practicing the metta loving-kindness meditation, and then the door opened and his daughter came running in, and so he opened it, I said, can't you see I'm doing my meditation? Get out of here.

Every day you disturb me while I'm doing it. There's a gap between the practice and living. So if you are a meditator, or if you take up meditation, beware of that, and very important, meditation must not be confined to just one time period when you sit down, when you sit in wherever you sit, on the floor, on a chair, on a cushion, and close your eyes.

Meditation needs to seep into everyday life, and this is what we call, of course, this is what we always address here, what the teaching is all about, that's the presence practice. And sometimes I recommend little, what I call mini meditations, and this is really a presence practice that you can do wherever you are, and in any situation. So I recommend, for example, every time you get into your car, when you close the door, not to immediately reach for the ignition, but to sit for at least about 30 seconds.

Don't do too much, not necessary. 30 seconds, and be present during those 30 seconds. You can choose either to have your attention on sense perceptions, visual, auditory, give it your complete attention, or you can have your attention on the fact that you are breathing, or you can have your attention on the feeling of the inner body as you sit there, the aliveness in the body.

30 seconds, unless there's an emergency, you need to get to the hospital, your wife is pregnant, then don't do it, or there's an extreme emergency. Now, many people live their everyday life as if their entire life were an emergency. It's not the case, that's a deep-seated form of conditioning.

In other words, they live in continuous stress, and that's really treating everyday life as a continuous emergency. Can you imagine living like that? And don't imagine it, many people do.

Living is amazing. So what does that mean? A continuous emergency means there's a

continuous, enormously powerful pull that pulls you out of yourself and out of the now into some kind of pursuit of future.

That's the emergency, because the emergency means I need to get there. There are some real emergencies, as I said, you may have to get to the hospital, or you may have to, whatever it is. But mostly it's not a real emergency, it's a form of conditioning.

The entire civilization is conditioned and conditions you in that way. It starts at school, it starts the way people live at home, in their family. There's always stress, always something to do.

I don't personally have much experience anymore with visiting families like that, because most people, if I visit people, they're already present, already living in presence. So I don't have that much contact anymore with the normal dysfunctional families. But I know that many of them still exist, the majority.

And I sometimes see it in films, when you see very quite realistic films, where you see a family interacting. God, they're all insane. Let's do this, have you done this?

Come on, let's do that. What's the next thing we have to do? This continuous stream of things arising in your mind, one mind object after another, content, completely absorbed in the content of your mind, that's ultimately what it is.

And so never finding any kind of space in your life. And really that's what meditation is all about, finding that most precious of things, or no things, space. Without space, your life is, as I sometimes called Winston Churchill, when he talked about human history, one damn thing after another.

And that's how many people experience their life. Just one, what's the next damn thing I have to do? And then you have a succession of damn things that you haven't done yet.

They're just waiting. And they're saying, give me attention, give me attention. And so you're torn.

It's a normal way to live these days. And even professions that used to be cushy and comfortable, like being a teacher, have become extremely stressful. And places that potentially could be and certainly should be places of healing, like hospitals, many of them are madhouses.

And sometimes the only grace that is still there is the nurses and a few doctors who are not completely lost, and they bring some presence into that situation. But very often the entire, everybody else is on the verge of a nervous breakdown continuously. There are even TV soap operas about life in a hospital.

It doesn't have to be like that. So this is a deep-seated form of conditioning and the

absence, the lack of space. And really that is, another word for space, we could say being, the sense of being, the formless and timeless sense of being or aliveness, spaciousness.

If that's lacking in your life, really nothing much is going to help you, no matter what you achieve, because the most precious thing is not there. The beingness, the connectedness with being, one could put it like that, some sense of inner spaciousness. That's where peace emanates, inner peace, can only emanate from there.

There is no peace to be found in any of the objects of consciousness. Sometimes the object deceives you and says, if I can only obtain this object of my desire, then I will achieve inner peace. Of course, then if you are lucky or unlucky enough to obtain it, then quickly you realize it didn't do its job.

It didn't do it for me. I thought fame would make me happy and complete it, and once fame comes, it comes to a few, to some it comes for a little while, fame is for a day, or you may be famous for a couple of years, or you may be famous for the rest of your life. But I've met a few famous people and unless they have gone beyond identification with that, they are as unhappy or more unhappy than non-famous people.

You very quickly see the downside of fame, big downsides. One of them being that newspapers invent stories about you. That's not true.

I never did that. I never said it. Why are they writing this about me?

Because they want to sell more papers so that you're being used by many people just to... So meditation then really is about, you could say, finding inner space, discovering inner space. I wouldn't say quite creating inner space because, although I might have said it once or twice, words are always never quite right.

You don't have to create inner space because inner space is your essential identity, the spaciousness of consciousness itself. So in that sense, you don't need to create it, produce it, achieve it, and here we come already to the pitfall that many meditators succumb to or fall into, whatever, is that unconsciously they make their meditation into something to be achieved, a means to an end. And then you try to get better in your meditation practice.

That sounds like a good thing to do, get better in my meditation practice. But what is being obscured by trying to get somewhere in your meditation, what's being obscured is the space that can only be accessed in the now. So for many people it happens unconsciously that meditation, which could be a great thing, if it's not done right, it's just another way of attempting to get to some future achievement through your meditation.

And of course you can achieve quite a few things. You can achieve a relatively still mind,

but it won't be the real thing. There'll be some kind of willpower behind it.

It's not the discovery of inner space. You're holding, maybe you're holding the lid on the kettle. You can sometimes look at a person, if you go to a place where there's group meditations, and you can sometimes see that in some, quite a few people, there's a lot of strain and holding back while they meditate.

Some people, sometimes in Eastern places, in Buddhist monasteries, there are some Westerners and some Eastern people, and sometimes the Eastern monks are very impressed by the Westerners, some of the Westerners, because they can sit still, they have so much willpower, they sit there. And of course they're showing everybody how great are in their meditation. And of course that's not, you can see when there's a lot of wanting there, a lot of force behind it, and that's not it.

There's no discovery of inner space there, but potentially meditation could be used as a way of discovering space, inner space, finding it, connecting with it, and realizing that essentially you are it. Meditation then is usually connected, it's always connected with your attention. Directing attention is the beginning, and the essential part of every meditation is, where is your attention?

Now for most people, their attention is continuously absorbed by thought activity, very habitual. For many people that is so overpowering that they wouldn't even be interested in meditation. They may not even have heard of it, it's not part of their reality.

They are so absorbed in the continuously arising streams of thought, that beyond that nothing exists for them, and they are not looking for anything, because apart from the continuously arising thoughts, they don't know there's anything else. They are so identified with that, that apart from the thoughts there is nobody there. At least they don't know that there is a deeper dimension.

It is obscured, completely obscured. So those people are then, we can say they are trapped in their ego, because the meaning of ego is complete identification with the stream of thinking, whereby the stream of thinking becomes invested with a sense of self. And because you are identified with every thought that arises, and that sense of self is the ego, the false self, normal human condition.

So, and often it is only when the living in that way creates more and more unhappiness, that at some point the unhappiness or the stress either makes you ill, or in itself is enough to create so much tension that something happens, and that is the good side of suffering or unhappiness. At some point there's a slight awakening, and there's a little crack in the egoic density, the shell of the ego. And that's the wonderful thing about the ego is that it has built into itself a self-destruct mechanism.

Sooner or later, the ego, because of the unhappiness it generates, the stress and the

suffering, sooner or later something cracks, either directly or something in the body cracks, in the physical, and then that creates an opening. And then perhaps if something cracks, then the person suddenly becomes interested in, ah, there may be more. And then you might want to explore meditation, or you're drawn to a spiritual teaching.

And then you become aware for the first time of where your attention is. And then you become aware for the first time of the kinds of thoughts you think habitually. It's not so much that you think the thoughts, it's the thoughts that inhabit your mind.

You don't think them because they're just there, they arise. You don't think your thoughts, the thoughts in the same way that you don't beat your heart. And so some of your attention then, a little bit of your attention detaches from thinking, and is there, and there's a little bit of a witness there that realizes what's going on in your mind.

That's wonderful. And then the desire may come, oh, okay, that wants to grow. And then you may take up a meditation practice.

And then you learn about your attention. Then you learn how enormously powerful the pull of your mind is, that of continuously wanting more attention for thoughts. And then you take up some meditation, and the first thing you learn in meditation, in any meditation, is to direct your attention to some meditation object.

So you learn to direct attention away from thinking onto some object. The object may be an external object, a flower. It may be a candle flame.

It could be anything. It could be a picture. It could be directing your attention to a word that is repeated in your mind, or a group of words, a so-called mantra.

And then you repeat that in your mind, and instead of going into all kinds of thought activity, thought activity is reduced then to just a few words, or one word. And a mantra is a traditional Eastern thing, and can be helpful for many people. You can create your own mantra, too.

You can say whatever. God is. Even if you don't believe in God, you can say, God is.

You can say, I am. You can ask the question, Who am I? It's a wonderful meditation, very simple, favored by the Indian teacher, Ramana Maharshi.

He recommended it highly. And if you don't want any kind of complicated meditation, I suggest you use that, so your attention, first of all, is directed to the words, Who am I, that you repeat every 20 seconds, 30 seconds, whatever feels comfortable, in your mind, silently. So the focus of your attention is, rather than going into all kinds of thinking, is reduced to those words.

And the wonderful thing about this meditation, in a way, one could say, the more simple

a meditation, the better. And this one is very simple. The wonderful thing about this meditation is, you have your attention on the words, attention, but after you've said those words, those words are a question.

Now, usually, a question demands an answer. And your mind might think that at some point, some answer will come into your mind, that will tell you who you are. And it may even happen, after you've done it for 10, 15, 20 minutes, suddenly your mind might say something, but whatever it says, that won't be quite it.

Even if your mind says, well, your mind might say all kinds of things. It might suddenly say, you are a miserable wretch, who has failed at everything you've done. Or your mind might suddenly say, you are the greatest being that has ever come to this planet, you are here to redeem the world, you are very special.

It's happened to some, even to some people who've gone very deep. Suddenly this thought came, oh, and they completely believed in that thought, I am the greatest. And then they announced it to the world, and started to write books.

And then, not only they believed in that thought, some other people started to believe in that too. And then you have a cult. So that may come in, and or you may have something much more subtle, and perhaps closer to who you are, it might say, you are timeless and unlimited consciousness itself.

Well, that's better, you can't really identify with that so much. And yet, that's not quite it either, because it's just another thought, just more concepts to believe in. A little bit better, I would say, than saying, I am the greatest that has ever lived, but still a conceptual structure that then you believe in and identify with.

So you have to be careful with this meditation, who am I? Because no matter what your mind says in answer to the question, will not be quite it. So why then ask the question, who am I?

Because what matters with this meditation is the silent space after the question. And the answer to who you are lies in the silent space after you have asked the question. And the only reason why you should then repeat the same question is to prevent all kinds of other thoughts from arising, because the silent space may only have a limited lifespan from our external viewpoint.

It may be there for a few seconds, and then some thought may come and say, have I answered my emails today? And so to prevent that kind of thought from arising, you just ask the question again. We need to know that, because otherwise the mind, after you've practiced this meditation for a while, will become frustrated and say, well, I've been doing this meditation that Eckhart talked about and that Ramana Maharshi recommended, and I haven't gotten anywhere with it.

I still don't know who I am. I haven't had an answer. That's because you haven't paid attention to the space after the question.

So this is a wonderful meditation once you know what to be aware of and be careful not to fall into some kind of error or belief. Who am I? Beautiful, gentle question that directs your attention to that which cannot be named, that which cannot be understood through concepts, that which has no time to it.

It can very quickly put you in touch with yourself, so to speak. The mind then, mind activity subsides, and there's just a beautiful space of beingness or presence. Who am I?

Who am I? Space. And how often you need to ask the question as the space remains, then there's no need to repeat the question.

Be with the space for perhaps a minute. It's fine. And then just to make sure that perhaps the question you find is arising again.

Who am I? Wonderful meditation. You can also do it, sometimes people do it to each other.

You can sit with your partner and look into his or her eyes and ask, Who are you? Answers are not required, by the way. Who are you?

Who are you? Sometimes there are such things, I've heard about it, I haven't experienced it in meditation. No, enlightenment intensives, I believe.

I don't know if anybody has had that experience of a group. And as far as I know, people often spend hours asking this question. And sometimes after two or three or four or five or six hours of being asked, Who are you?

Apparently some people have a realization. Now whether it's produced in such a way, whether it's a lasting realization, I don't know. Somebody's shaking his head no, so that's the answer.

So that's not needed. Don't overdo anything. That's again a pitfall of meditation, because people think if meditation is good, more of it must be even better.

And more of it must be better still. And then people become obsessed with meditation. And I've seen some people even going, becoming mentally very unbalanced after a while, because they thought, Okay, I'm going to get there.

Where? You're there already. I will get there.

And then suddenly after doing eight, nine, ten hours of meditation every day for several weeks, they had to be taken away. So moderation, no need to overdo it. There's nowhere to get.

You think there's somewhere to get? No, there isn't. That's the very thing of meditation is that it opens up for you the depths of the present moment.

If you are going anywhere in your meditation, where you're going is more deeply into the now. That sounds very strange, because when we talk about now, the timeless dimension, we're using words. All words originate in the world, the dimension of time.

So even to say, although I would say it's a true statement, but it's a paradoxical statement to say we are going more deeply into the now. More implies there's time. So there's always a paradox when you talk about the now using words and using words that originate in this dimension of time.

But that's how it is. So let's become comfortable with a paradox and say that meditation is about the deepening into the vertical dimension, so that you are no longer lost in the horizontal dimension of life, past and future, one thought after another, one thing to do after another. And looking for yourself in the horizontal dimension, where there is no, as the Buddha already said, there is no self there.

The self that you're looking for cannot be found. Anatta, I believe, in Pali. Anatta, no self, Buddha said, enormous insight, 2,600 years ago, no matter where you go and what you do, what condition you enter into or find, it's not self.

And if you are looking for yourself where there is no self, you encounter dukkha, which means suffering. Wonderful. And suffering in whatever form, unhappiness, unsatisfactoriness, discontent, irritation, whatever, all forms of suffering.

So if you don't realize that there is no self in anything that you can identify with in the world of mind objects, whatever it is, possessions, relationships, places, people, situations, achievements, successes, failures, they're all self. There's no self in them. They're just conditions that arise, come and go, come and go.

And that's the third part of the teaching of the Buddha. It's any mind object in any condition that arises is impermanent, impermanent. In the Pali language, anicca, I believe, fleeting.

So if you're looking for yourself in what is fleeting and what is impermanent, where there is no self, then you suffer. So the whole teaching is about, the Buddhist teaching, any spiritual teaching, is about the kingdom of heaven in the vertical dimension of now. So the meditation, if it works, takes you into the vertical dimension of now, and that is what this meditation does when you ask, who am I?

Just what remains is there's no mind object. There's only this. Everything else falls away.

Beautiful meditation. Another meditation object that is a very simple one, again, the meditation object means that to which attention is directed, is your breathing, and that's

a very ancient meditation. Breathing is quite a nice meditation object because it does not have a clearly defined form.

It's a very subtle thing, and it's always there. It's always there. Mostly you're not aware of it, but you're always breathing, or breathing is always happening in your body.

And so taking your attention to the fact that you are breathing is another very simple meditation that anybody can practice for 10 minutes, 15 minutes a day, if you want to make it into a structured meditation. Or you can take one conscious breath occasionally, which is already a mini meditation. What does that mean, one conscious breath?

It means you're aware of the air moving into your nose and into your body. Now there, people have developed various ways of being aware of that. The most basic form of this kind of breath awareness, which is designed for people who have an extremely noisy mind, and they just, to ask them to be aware of their breath half a breath is too much to ask.

They can do half a breath, the in-breath, but by the time they breathe out, they're thinking about something else. So there are many people whose mind is so active, and perhaps even half a breath they can't do. And for those people, they have devised, well they, I mean, these are some forms of meditation that are used in Buddhism, although they have nothing to do with Buddhism as such.

Anybody could use them. And there you start by counting your breaths. So if your mind is over, absolutely overactive, then you just go, as you breathe in, you count from one to nine, one, two, three, four, in your mind, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, a little pause, and as you breathe out you count from nine to one, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one.

Now of course you're not free of thought there. You haven't found inner space yet, but this is for people who are burdened with an extremely noisy mind. And they should be doing that, they say, for perhaps a few months at least.

And gradually you can reduce the number of counts, one to six, then you do one to three, and then if you're lucky you can just do one or two. And that's called the counting. It's part of a practice that is called in Buddhism, I believe, Samatha, calm, to calm your mind.

The next stage then, once you can do the counting, now many of you won't need that, because your mind is not that active, otherwise you wouldn't be here listening to this. You would be off thinking about something else. The next step, and this is perhaps for many of you might be helpful, is to follow, it's called the following, you follow the breath with your attention as it moves into the body.

You can actually feel the air moving into the body, and then you follow it with your

attention as it moves out of the body. That's quite a pleasant thing to do. Let's just do it just for a few breaths, with eyes closed or eyes open.

Eyes closed is probably easier. I'll keep my eyes open as I speak, but I'll also do it. In-breath, follow your attention, follow the breath, and out-breath.

In-breath, and out-breath. In-breath, and out-breath. In-breath, out-breath.

Quite pleasant, you have a meditation object that's very close to you. And that leads us even to a more subtle thing, that is to feel the air at the tip of your nose, where the air comes in, a very subtle feeling, it's called the touching. So now you feel the air as it touches your nose on its way into the body.

Now to feel that you need more acute attention. You can practice with that. So you will notice that the attention needs to be more acute so that you can catch that very subtle feeling where the air moves into the nostrils.

And then comes something that they don't even teach in all schools. The most important part in any meditation is to drop the meditation object. So once you can feel the subtleness of the air entering your nostrils, at that point, when you are good at it, drop it, finish, that's the end of the meditation, because what remains is attention itself, bare attention itself, and that's the space, consciousness itself.

So no matter what meditation object you use, one tends to get attached. If meditation, you become peaceful as you meditate, one tends to become attached to the meditation object, but, and then that again is a pitfall in meditation, because eventually every object, every meditation object is to be relinquished so that what remains is the formless consciousness itself. That's the beauty of it, and that's the only reason why you have a meditation object.

The only thing is that many people find it hard to go directly from normal mind-identified consciousness into the realization of consciousness itself, but that can be done. You can, as you sit here, often I invite you to realize that in yourself without necessarily going through the meditation. So the opportunity is there at any moment to realize that in you that underlies all thought, that underlies all mind activity.

So at any moment the possibility is there, there you realize who you are beyond thought, and the, and thought can subside suddenly, it can happen spontaneously, and really the entire spiritual teaching is aimed at this realization of who you are underneath all the mind objects, underneath all the clutter of the mind, plus the emotions that go with the mind activity. So the ultimate, the aim of meditation is to find that clarity, that peace, and that space, but some people find it even without the meditation. Some people find it because life has become unbearably painful, and suddenly they step out of that which created all the pain, identification with form.

And then the closest in this teaching that we get to meditation is inner body, and that's another beautiful thing. You can either, I usually recommend inner body awareness in everyday life, when you listen to somebody, when you're looking at something, especially nature, connect with the aliveness within, and then look at the tree, so that you're not putting abstraction onto the aliveness of that being that we call tree, that beautiful, mysterious, everything is mysterious, and the mind believes that once you have put a label on something, you know it. But you can see that this is, it's a pseudo-knowing, it's fine as a practical thing in everyday life, but to call a tree a tree, or that's an oak tree, or that's such and there are many different kinds of oak trees. So now, no, it's not just an oak tree, that is such and such an oak tree.

Oh, okay, now I know what it is. Finished. I finished with that.

What's the next thing I can label? So you haven't actually connected with a tree, you haven't contacted the essential reality of that thing that the mind calls tree, the depth of it, the mystery of it, because you believe that once you call something by a name, then you know what it is. It's not, it's just an attachment of a concept onto something that is profound, and you do it to yourself.

You attach concepts and labels to who you think you are, and then that becomes, then you miss the profundity of your very being. So then you're trapped, again, that's the horizontal dimension of thought. So we need to break through that, not believing in the thoughts that arise, especially thoughts that concern you or other people.

Who am I? Well, then you refer to your personal history, or the way in which you interpret your life. Nothing to do, essentially, with who you are.

Not believing in labels. And so, feeling the inner body can be done as a structured meditation, or can be practiced in everyday life as a way of anchoring yourself in the now, as a way of keeping the conceptualizing mind out of the way, and relating more deeply to people and things, whatever it is you perceive, the life around you. The inner body, when it's done as a structured meditation, is quite an old meditation, been around for hundreds or perhaps thousands of years.

The practitioners of this meditation believe that that was one of the meditations originally taught by the Buddha, and they have some scriptures to prove it. Of course, nobody knows what the Buddha actually said. Many of the scriptures were written much, much later.

But that doesn't matter. It is a powerful meditation. They call it vipassana, and it's a very structured meditation where you gradually, your attention gradually goes from one part of the body to the other.

You can do it as a, learn it as a practice, if you want. The way I recommend inner body is

less structured or hardly structured. I might say feel the aliveness in your hands as you sit here, and then feel the aliveness in your feet at the same time.

Feel the aliveness means direct your attention there, away from thinking. Feel the aliveness throughout the body as you sit here and listen. And then if you want to make it into a structured or more real kind of so-called meditation, then you sit upright in a chair or on a floor, close your eyes and go deeply into that feeling of aliveness.

That's quite beautiful too. So that all your attention is in that intense sense of aliveness that pervades the entire body where it isn't really the body anymore. Well, you don't know what it is.

It's just aliveness. And there's no longer, when you go deeply into that aliveness, you can do it as I speak. If you close your eyes, or even with your eyes open, close your eyes, go into that aliveness, and even the sense of, I am aware of the aliveness disappears because the consciousness and the aliveness become one.

So this is a good meditation because the meditation object, you merge with the meditation object. There isn't you and the object. So when you go deeply into the inner body in your meditation, with your eyes closed, you get a sense that you are that field.

The inner body is the field of consciousness, the spaciousness. You are that. It is aware of itself.

You are aware of yourself. No duality. When you go deeply into the body, there's no duality of the observer and the observed.

The observer and the observed are one. That's a wonderful realization. And then, when you sense that strongly, then you open your eyes and stay connected with that sense, and then look around the room or wherever you are, and then you feel the depth and sense perceptions.

Beautiful. That's the way, absolute balance between the outer world of form and the inner world of being. You're connected with being.

[Speaker 4] (5:24:00 - 5:24:00)

Wow.

[Speaker 1] (5:24:02 - 6:01:21)

So that's just a wonderful meditation practice. If you want to do it in a more formal way, do it once a day or so, twice a day, sit somewhere quiet, erect, not lying in some... Because you would fall below thinking.

If you lie on a sofa or couch, want really relax and do your meditation, you will quickly

fall below thinking. That's the only reason why people then attempt to sit erect. And if you want to sit cross-legged on the floor, and if it's...

That can, on the one hand, can be a distraction. It can also be something that's part of your meditation. If your legs start to hurt, these days it's painful for me to sit like that.

My legs start to hurt after a few minutes. But if that happens, that's fine. You can surrender to that, and then there's a space around it that too can become part of your practice.

I think Kim will have more to say about that. That too can become part of your practice. Pain arises while you sit.

Do you need to immediately do something about it, or can you just say, or say nothing, just be with it? Which means, there's a space around it. It's completely accepted for what it is, and so that it just is.

And that brings me to another aspect of meditation, any meditation that you do. Discomfort may arise sometimes during meditation. Discomfort is something that everybody is familiar with.

Some people spend their whole lives in discomfort, psychological discomfort. And so if discomfort arises, or irritation arises, or impatient arises, or any kind of mind condition arises, and you can learn there to simply be with it. Accept the form that this moment takes in the form of pain in the knee.

You accept the form of this moment. And that in itself can become a meditation. And that is why in Zen, Zazen, the school of Zen, they have a meditation that they call sitting.

No structure whatsoever. All they tell you is, sit and be with what is. And you sit for hours and be with what is.

That's the Zen meditation. And they put you in a room, you're facing the wall, and then they open the windows in the winter, and the cold air comes in, and you sit there shivering, and you be with what is. And then you observe your mind, what it comes up with.

What am I doing here? What's the point of all this? This is dreadful.

I could be home in a warm bed. Oh my God, this is so stupid. And then you be with the mind, the thoughts that arise in your mind.

You see that? Be with that. And you don't say to the thoughts, I mustn't have these thoughts.

No. Whatever is, you be with what is. That's the Zen meditation that has no other structure, or no structure, except that sitting.

That's why they don't even call it meditation. They call it sitting. And so they ask you when you go to a monastery, how long have you been sitting?

And you say, I'm not sitting, I'm standing. What they mean is, how long have you been meditating? Oh, I've been sitting for 25 years.

So hopefully, they no longer need the Zen monastery. And that's an interesting thing. That's really where, this is the way to live, to be with what is, because what is already is.

And to fight that is absurd. And so that's what you learn then in your Zen meditation, the most simple form of meditation. And some people would say, the most difficult form of meditation.

Just sitting, just. And again, you can use that. Even without a teacher, you can just sit.

There's nothing much to learn beyond that. Just sitting and being with what is. The only thing you don't have, the helpful thing in some Zen monasteries, somebody to hit you with a stick from behind the moment he sees that you are drifting off somewhere.

Whack! And then you have to say, thank you. So that meditation then, being with what is, has no specific meditation object except the condition that arises at this moment.

That is, whatever condition arises at this moment, externally or internally, is the meditation object. An emotion, a thought, a feeling, a physical sensation, or externally, cold air, warm air, heat, cold, people making funny noises around you, disturbing noises, a lawnmower, drill. Be with what is.

Everything, and again, that's in this meditation, whatever is, is incorporated into the meditation. So you can never say, I can't meditate because this is happening. Well, that's part of the meditation.

So whatever happens is incorporated into the meditation. So there are no excuses left then. I can't meditate because the children are screaming.

Well, that's your meditation object. Be the space for that. And then you learn really that it's a preparation for living in that way.

That's the ultimate. The real meditation is, and that's the awakened state of consciousness. Whatever arises at this moment, whatever condition arises at this moment, is part of the is-ness of life and is therefore accepted fully.

It doesn't mean you become powerless. It means you contact enormous power. You become an expression of enormous power, which is the power and intelligence of life

itself, which can then act through you and come into this world.

True intelligence. And that can only come if you no longer obstruct the power of the present moment. It's always there.

Now, the fact that you can obstruct the power of the present moment does not mean that you are more powerful than it. It means it's just somebody who closes, as I sometimes give the example of closing the shutters, the sun can't come in. It doesn't mean the shutters are more powerful than the sun.

So this is the most powerful way to live, that the Zen meditation can just show it to you, you can practice there, and then the vital thing is to live it in daily life. And so a meditation can be very helpful, especially very simple meditations. You don't need the complicated ones.

Well, except, as I said, the counting. If your mind is totally mad, then you have to start with the counting. You can't just be with what is, because you don't even know what is.

When you sit down, your mind will immediately go off into what isn't here. It will go off into thinking about my investments, what's going to happen to them. Be with what is.

No, no, I have to think about the investment. I have to think about the falling property prices. Gosh, what's going to happen if I'm never going to sell my house, my life insurance, my whatever.

Anything except what is, I need to worry about it. If I don't worry about it, it'll all fall apart. I need to be responsible and hold it together by worrying about it, especially in the middle of the night.

And so Zen teaches you then the simplicity of the is-ness. That's really the secret of Zen, is that it's simple to be with what is. And that's why the Zen master said, well, the story goes that some disciples went to their Zen master and said, the other master from that other monastery, we were just told that he can walk across the river.

He walks on water. What can you do, they asked the master. And of course, the famous answer of the Zen master was, what can I do?

When I'm hungry, I eat. When I'm tired, I sleep. That's the answer.

It means he is absolutely, just totally present in whatever arises. That's all that is needed. No stuff around it.

Just the simplicity of this moment. Just facing this moment as it is. When you are completely aligned with this moment, you are in continuous meditation.

You are in meditation now by simply being with what is. That's the successful Zen

meditator, is that. And not only that, if you live in that way, for as long as you live in that way, you are the spiritual master.

To be a spiritual master, you don't need to know anything. People sometimes think you need to have a lot of knowledge to be a spiritual teacher. It's not true.

All you need is to be completely aligned with the present moment. And then whatever is needed in the moment will come through you. And you will never go beyond your real life experience.

And you don't need to. So any answer that's needed, either in your own life or for somebody else, if you can just be with what is, become present and still, then that's primordial intelligence operating. And that is the spiritual teacher.

You never become a spiritual teacher. And if you feel that, okay, I'm now ready to be a teacher, no. The best feeling is actually to feel that you are not ready to be a teacher and you don't know anything.

You have nothing to say and nothing to teach. That's the start of every talk I give. What else can I say?

I've been talking for so long. What else is there to say? It's completely empty.

Nothing. And the teaching there doesn't come from the person or the person's accumulated knowledge. It comes through the person.

So the person really is never ready to be a teacher. And if the person is ready, then that's a delusion. You don't have to be ready.

You just have to be spacious enough. Spacious. In other words, get out of the way, as it can put it.

If you get out of the way, it happens through you. And you live in that way. It's not just, I'm just using the example of spiritual teaching.

Anything that you do that is truly powerful, you have to, in the moment of doing at least, or in the moment of creation, you have to get out of the way, and it comes through you. And every creative person, unless the ego has come back and obscured that wonderful flow of aliveness, unless the ego has come back and then claims some kind of merit, and so the creator feels superior to other humans because I did that. No, you didn't.

It happened because you got out of the way. And then the primordial intelligence and the power of life, the power of now, came through you. That's how it happened.

And that's how any true creation happens. It's interesting. I have some questions here, questions that people have been asking, for example, about art and music, relationship

between the state of being present and creating art or music.

Of course, is there presence in music, somebody asks. Well, it depends on who is creating the music. Where is it coming from?

And there is a fundamental difference. Anybody can verify it, and anybody deep down knows it. For example, music, where does it truly original music come from?

And I'm not just talking about classical music, even relatively simple music. Some of it comes from a place of originality and power. It is inspired.

It almost comes into this world ready-made, as if it were, it's already there somewhere, and then the person who writes this music or plays this music is just receiving it. And any great act of creation is a receiving, and so this is how, and sometimes to a human being, a stream comes where they are connected with that. And every piece of music they write has this originality and power to it.

And strange enough, humans recognize it when they hear it. That's the music that survives. If you listen to the radio, you will find many kinds of continuous playing music.

Now, most things that you listen to, they may be popular for a few weeks or a few months, sometimes a few days, and then it disappears. But there are some pieces that don't disappear. You hear them again, and if you switch on the radio in ten years, you still hear that piece.

If you switch on the radio in 50 years from now, they're still playing it. And why? There is a qualitative difference between that and ordinary stuff that the mind tries to create without the connectedness with where all creativity comes from.

And so it's contrived. It may even be clever, but it doesn't have that quality. So even simple music like the Beatles songs, they came from somewhere deeper.

Some people would say, well, you can't compare the Beatles to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Well, you can. They came from the same place.

It's just Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is obviously more complex, but they both have this spark of originality to them that a human just cannot create it. The human mind alone cannot do that. And it can even happen that a person can spend a whole life making music, and only one night he or she connects with that ground where all creativity arises.

That was the case, for example, I read about it recently. There was a woman in South Africa who went to court because her husband had composed a piece of music. The only thing that he was ever remembered for, he composed a piece of music.

But because he was a black man at that time, her husband had died. At that time in

South Africa, black people had no rights, so he sold this piece of music for five dollars. And he had been playing music all his life.

Only one night he wrote this piece that came from a deeper, everything else that he wrote disappeared. This piece survived because it had that essential quality of aliveness and originality to it. And so she finally got several million dollars from this one piece of music that he composed one night, which at first became popular throughout Africa, and then throughout the world.

It's called The Lion Sleeps Tonight. Wonderful, there's something there, you can't make that up. I'd like to sing the whole thing, I can't remember the words.

So no matter what you do in life, whatever you do, that connectedness is vital. And knowing that it's not up to me, ultimately. It's up to me, only to connect with the depth of being within.

And then whatever you do, the power will flow into it. And if it's very limited what you do, then sometimes, let's say you have a job in a factory, and there's just no scope for anything much to happen. If all you do is pick up a box from here, open it and put in three things, close the box and hand it on and pick up another box, then it doesn't, the important thing is not to fall into negativity and say there's nothing.

And connect with the aliveness, and if life sees that there's no outlet in your present circumstances for the power within you, life will put you somewhere else. The first thing that may happen is that you lose your job. And then because you're connected with the power within, you're not going to complain, because you're going to be like the man that I mentioned the other day, who whatever happened, he shouted, God is great.

So if you lose your job, you'd say, God is great, great, it must be the right thing. And so often it might look negative, because life needs to disrupt your present circumstances to make room for something else. So if you connect with the power within, and life, when I say life, I mean primordial, the one intelligence that pervades the universe.

If there is no outlet in your present circumstances for power, the power that is within you, then life will remove your present circumstances and create circumstances where there is an outlet. But if you are already doing something, and if that what you're doing already could become infinitely enhanced, if you connect with that source of creativity within you, then you will find that you stay where you are. It's just an enormous expansion.

If you are playing in the street, the guitar or whatever, for a few pennies, busking, and you suddenly, you connect with that, and you even begin to play original things, then something will happen, and that thing will expand. Life may not take you away from your guitar, it will empower the guitar. And suddenly, somebody walks past you and stops for

a second and says, come and see me.

So that's the, wherever you are, trust, your responsibility is to embrace the power of the present moment within you, to not resist the is-ness of whatever condition is now that obstructs the power. So I'm really, we've been talking about meditation, but it always comes back to living, how to live in this moment now. That's what it's all about.

And becoming good at meditation is nothing. The question is, are you good at living? Do you live connected with the power or cut off from it, the power of yourself ultimately, the power of the universe?

So then, what you learn in the Zen meditation is not to complain about anything in your life, but to incorporate everything into your meditation, and now your meditation is your life. That's ultimately what it is. It's not the little meditation period.

That can be a, it can be a practice ground for life, but ultimately what matters is life, and life is now. So if you're practicing, incorporating whatever happens while you sit in meditation, into the meditation, nothing can happen that will obstruct your meditation, and then nothing can happen in your life that will obstruct the power, but not if you complain and resist what is. The power comes when there is inner alignment with what is, the is-ness of now.

No matter what form that takes, that's where power comes into your life, and that's in all the, that's in all the teachings, and so that's all that meditation can teach you, to do. You don't need time. It's a little absurd to say, I need time to become good at accepting the present moment, or to take a three-year course in accepting the present moment.

I'm learning to accept the present moment, but I'm not there yet. So there's nothing that you need to add to your life so that you can finally accept the present moment. There are many delusions that the mind will bring up.

Why, why you, why you can't do it now? I can accept everything except where I live, or accept whatever, that my parents don't understand me, or accept the, remember that acceptance has nothing to do with some kind of story in your mind. That's not acceptance.

This is often a delusion when people misunderstand when I speak of acceptance. So some people say, okay, I need to accept that I have no money in the bank, that I'm poor, that I've ruined my life. I need to accept that I live in a dreadful place.

Oh, if you call it dreadful, what where's the acceptance? You've already judged it as bad. You have already called your life bad.

I need to accept that I'm ruined, that all my investments have collapsed, and I'm completely ruined. All these things are stories in your mind. It would be absurd.

Or I need to accept that I'm, I'm ill. Of course, you may be ill from the point of view of medical viewpoint. That may be the case.

But that is not what you need to accept. Because this feeling I am ill is a mental construct. All you need to accept is the reality of this moment.

And in this moment, there is no illness. But there may be pain, there may be discomfort, there may be disability, there may be weakness in the body. This is, this is how this so-called illness manifests at this moment.

So all you need to accept is whatever manifests in this moment, not some idea around it. Then you get into illusion. So the person who is, who has an illness, you don't accept, I need to accept that I have cancer, that I have AIDS, that I need to accept whatever.

No, that's the story. Acceptance only concerns this moment, whatever it is that you feel or experience at this moment. So you're not denying that you're ill, nor do you subscribe to that belief that you are ill.

You just leave that alone, and you address only the conditions that arise at this moment in your life. And that's what you accept. And with that, often, if it is an illness, then you accept only the symptom as it appears at this moment, because it is already there.

At this moment, there's pain, there's the disability, there's this, there's that. That's what is. That becomes part of your meditation practice, which is your life.

So your life becomes, all you ever need to accept is that. Let's say you're in prison. Let's say your sentence is 25 years.

So you sit in that cell, and I'm talking about that because often I get correspondence from people in prison. So you, if you then say, okay, I need to accept that I'm stuck in here for the next 25 years, and that I've messed my, my whole life up completely. I need to accept that.

No, that's a story. And that's time. All you need to accept is at this moment, you're sitting here, there's a little window.

You're looking out of the window. You're breathing. You feel the aliveness of the inner body.

There's a little metal plate in front of you, and you're eating a piece of bread. And there's a glass of water, and you're drinking that. And there are the walls that you're seeing.

And these are the conditions of this moment, and they are as they are. You add nothing to them. Like, dislike, good.

That's the Zen master. You're the master. You add nothing to it, and the bare conditions

of this moment are as they are.

That's what you accept. And with that power comes, and with that, internally you become free of dependency on external conditions. That's where incredible power comes into your life.

And it's often the case that miracles happen when you enter and live in that state of consciousness. So you might have 25 years sentence in prison, and you could find that unexpectedly something happens, and you're free. And I don't necessarily mean an opportunity comes to escape.

It could come in a different way. It probably won't come in that way. And if it doesn't, you're still free in prison.

And I've had correspondents from people in prison said, I found freedom here. And to them, the prison has become like a Zen monastery. Whatever condition arises is part of the meditation.

And so that's I'm saying that so that it's easy to misunderstand the term acceptance. Acceptance is always the simplicity of this moment that is to be accepted, not a story around this moment. And then gradually you learn to live less and less with stories, imposing stories on your life, and traveling through life with the heaviness of stories of who you are in relationship to the world.

Not good enough or better than most. But if you think you're better than most, underneath is the fear that you're not good enough anyway. That's why you have to think you're better than most.

All kinds of stuff that people live with and live through. No, your life is now. Your life is always now.

And that is the focal point of your consciousness. Now and you're aligned with now. And the moment you're aligned with now, you become the space for now.

You were it already, but you didn't know it. Now consciously you become the space for now. And you're free.

And that's where power comes suddenly through you. And only if enough humans begin to live in that way is the world going to truly change. And then you have fulfilled the purpose of your life on earth.

Aligned with the evolutionary purpose of the entire, not just the planet, the evolutionary purpose of the entire universe wants that. It wants the flowering of that new consciousness to happen. And that's why we're here.

It's not going to happen. It's happening. Us being here is because it's happening.

We're not in expectation of utopia or something like that. We're not in expectation that a new world is going to arise. No, we are here because the new world, which is based on the new state of consciousness, is arising.

There's no future expectation. And we don't need the world to change to become free. No, becoming free comes first.

Then the world changes. It's so simple. That's why the mind says, oh, this is hard.

Let's make sure we are at home in the present moment and inhabiting the body. So a little bit of your attention is in the body, the inner energy field of the body. And the rest of your attention is on sense perception.

And in that way, you are anchored in the present moment. The inner energy field provides the anchor for staying present. If you can't feel anything in your body, start with your hands.

Direct your attention into your hands and see if you can feel a little bit of aliveness in there.

[Speaker 4] (6:01:24 - 6:01:24)

Oh, yes.

[Speaker 1] (6:01:25 - 7:31:11)

There it is. And your feet, are they alive? Oh, yes.

You can feel almost a kind of tingling. There's energy there. There's life energy in there.

And so you can connect with the entire body as a global sense of aliveness as you sit here, because wherever you are, you're here and now. And the mind will not be excessively active when your attention is in the inner energy field. You can be alert without unnecessary interference of thinking, without having to wait for the next moment to provide some kind of improvement.

So the realization comes that this moment is actually good enough, more than good enough, because you're beginning to feel the goodness that is underneath the phenomenal appearance of the present moment, the forms. You're getting in touch with the formless. One of the things we are doing as part of our new venture, which is a kind of experiment, using the Internet to reach many thousands of people, occasionally I present a book to you that has been very meaningful to me for many years.

There are a number of books that I've carried around. Well, sometimes I lost copies and then I bought another one, because I moved around so much. And we already, in one of the previous sessions, we had one session on one of the greatest books ever written, the

Tao Te Ching.

We had a session on that, and I feel that we are going to have another session on that at some point. Not today, though. For today, I've chosen a book.

Before I continue, I need to tell you, we're not studying something that's external to ourselves. We're not here, it's not a university setting. We're not learning philosophy.

We're only using the subject matter of the book as an alternative pointer to the reality within ourselves. So it's not anything, we're not studying anything outside ourselves that would be useless. So this book, that actually I never lost, it's been with me for 25 or 30 years.

I bought it new, but now the pages are turning yellow, the edges, which means I'm getting old. When books that you bought new turn yellow around the edges, you're getting old, or the quality of the paper is deteriorating. Emerson.

Ralph Waldo Emerson. Essays, which he became famous for. What I'm going to do is just read very brief extracts one or two of the essays, and then we will comment on that.

As some of you may know, Emerson was born in Boston in 1803, died about 80 years later, and most of his life he traveled around giving talks. A very unusual thing, he was kind of a 19th century spiritual teacher, a very unusual thing for the 19th century. And some of these essays have enormous power, so he must have gone very deep within to be able to write these things.

An important thing, just a very brief look at his life. As many people who are destined to go very deep within, he experienced a not very pleasant childhood and early life. At a very early age, and this is the case with many people who are forced, either destined to go deeper within, or if not destined, they are forced by life's circumstances to go deeper within.

And so in his case, at the age of eight, his father died. So becoming acquainted with mortality at a very early age, a very painful thing. Then there were five children.

His mother was relatively poor, so they lived on very little. The mother had to feed five boys. Then later, in his early 20s, he developed tuberculosis, a potentially fatal illness, but recovered from it.

Then he got married, and two years later his wife died. So again, it became very clear to him, it must have become very clear to him, how fragile, how impermanent, fleeting the world of form is, of bodies and forms. So whether he already realized that on a conscious level, there must have been a very deep having to go deeper within.

And then he studied at Harvard to become a theologian, to become a minister. He

became a minister, but was not happy with the constraints of the church, and then left the church and started just giving talks, and some of the talks became the essays. So you can see retrospectively how loss is very often a concealed blessing.

You don't know it at the time. At the time, it just seems a dreadful thing to be happening to you. But if you look deeper, and especially if you're able to come to a state of acceptance, then the moment you surrender to what is, the other side of loss reveals itself to you.

There's grace hiding behind every loss. It's good to know next time loss comes to you, as it will of course, because you can't go through life without experiencing loss. People around you are going to leave you, unless you leave them first.

Bodies dissolve, and the older you get, the more clearly you see, wow, all these bodies are dissolving. A very brief, just a few sentences here on being, and the sense of being, finding that within yourself. He says, oh, I must before I read, this is mid-19th century English prose, so at first, it might be for some of you who are not used to reading that kind of thing, Jane Austen or that kind of thing, may find it a little bit unusual at first.

For the sense of being which in calm hours rises, we know not how in the soul, is not diverse from things, from space, from light, from time, from man, but one with them, and proceeds obviously from the same source whence their life and being also proceeds. We first share the life by which things exist, and afterwards see them as appearances in nature, and forget that we have shared their cause. Here is the fountain of action and the fountain of thought.

Here are the lungs of that inspiration which gives man wisdom, of that inspiration of man which cannot be denied without impiety and atheism. We lie in the lap of immense intelligence, which makes us organs of its activity and receivers of its truth. When we discern justice, when we discern truth, we do nothing of ourselves, but allow a passage to its beams, the beams of that great intelligence like the sunlight.

So the sense of being which in calm hours rises, we know not how in the soul, is not diverse from things, from space, from light, from time, from man, but one with them. In calm hours means when you become still inside, when the mind activity subsides, then what arises is something that had been obscured by mental noise, which is the sense of being, and that really is the essence. Sometimes it's called the sense of I am, without any addition to the I am, not I am this or I am that.

The sense of beingness, as you may remember from grammar lessons at school, to be and I am is part of the same verb. It's easy to forget when you say I am is the first person singular of to be. So being and I am is the same, so getting that sense of your innermost identity which has no form to it, no mental concept, no physical appearance, it's deeper than that, a formless sense of being that is there, clearly is revealed when the

continuous flux of forms, especially mind forms, subsides.

So that sense of being is always, has always been there underneath the mental noise. And when that is realized as the essence of who you are, in other words, you are formless in essence, timeless, the Buddhists call it empty, and of course Western scholars misinterpret that. They say it's a nihilistic religion, or it's life denying.

They don't realize that what Buddhists call emptiness is the formless essence of all life, and timeless. And that is something to be realized, of course, only in the, it's inextricably one with what we call the present moment. We could say it is the present moment, because it is the space in which everything arises.

All sense perception, all thoughts, all emotion, where do they appear? They appear in that space of being, which you could also call unconditioned consciousness, timeless. And that is the eternal in you.

And once that is known directly, not as an intellectual fact or belief, directly. And again, not known as you know the flower or the table or the tree, not known as a subject knows an object, but knowing yourself as the eternal subject, not making yourself into an object, and that's the ego. That's what happened to the human mind.

We made ourselves into objects, and then you begin to have a relationship with yourself. And then you start liking or disliking yourself. And then you talk about that you have a life, not realizing that you are life.

And perhaps then only the dog or the cat can still remind you that they don't have a life, they are life. They don't have an unhappy or happy story. They are life.

That's why we talked about nature. Nature still lives in that state of connectedness. And once you realize that, you recognize that formless essence that you are wherever you look.

It is the underlying one, the one life, the one timeless life that you are. And then wherever you look, every tree, every animal, every blade of grass, even the sun, the stars, your dog or your cat, you recognize something there, something that any life form is also an expression of that one. So you recognize yourself in others, which is the most beautiful thing, when you recognize the essence of who you are in the flower.

And you recognize it not through any mental concept, but through the absence of mental concepts. It is only mental concepts that create the barrier between yourself and the flower, when you start calling it something. Or another human being, the beauty of being with another human being, without the interference, the screen of conceptualization, just spacious presence.

No matter what the other human being is doing or saying, you are there as spacious

presence for whatever arises in this moment. That means you are connected with the one, you are that, and recognize it, there's nothing alien anymore, there is ultimately no other anymore. And this is what he is talking about.

The sense of being which in calm hours rises, when you become still, now, we know not how, it rises within, is not diverse from things, from space, from light, from time, from man, but one with them and proceeds obviously from the same source when their life and being also proceeds. And then that is intelligence itself, not the intelligence that can be measured by IQ tests, but primordial, unconditioned intelligence is there when you discover that dimension in yourself. Here is the fountain of action, spontaneous action arises out of that presence, and the fountain of thought, it can inspire the mind.

Creative thought can only come when you still contact that dimension, realize that is who you are in essence, and then your mind starts to operate and it becomes inspired, it becomes an instrument rather than self-serving mind activity. And then all the repetitive thinking gradually subsides and more creative thinking happens. And in between the creative thinking there are wonderful spaces of not thinking.

The greatest thing that can happen to you, and hopefully is happening to you, is to discover within yourself spaces of not thinking. You have not reverted back to the vegetable realm, you have gone beyond thinking. And from the point of view of the ego that's not a big thing, it says, how does that solve my problems, not thinking?

The conceptual mind does not understand the significance of that. I sometimes say that all I have achieved in life is I don't need to think unless I want to think. That really is where everything comes from, just becoming comfortable with a state of not knowing from the point of view of the mind.

Going to a talk, in my case, sitting down and having the feeling I have absolutely nothing to say and becoming comfortable with not knowing. Not just when you are going to give a talk, in any situation, you don't need to work it out conceptually, what am I going to, how am I going to deal with this person, how am I going to deal with this situation. Be there, bring the presence to it and let that intelligence come through you.

It can then use your mind and you find yourself saying something original, or you find yourself saying just the right thing that is helpful for that moment and that person. Or you find yourself taking spontaneous action, suddenly the right thing, the right action arises. You suddenly realize what it is that you need to do.

You've been thinking about it for years and suddenly you let go of thinking, space opened up and the realization is there. So for a balanced life there needs to be the two dimensions in your life, the dimension of form, I call that human, the human dimension, where you are a person with a history and you think and you have relatives and relationships and you have a life situation which is good or bad or changes from good to

bad and bad to good. And you are the being dimension of the human being, most humans don't know that yet, there is the being dimension that is the formless.

So a truly fruitful life is the balance between the formless essence within yourself and the world of form. Most humans on this planet are lost in form, totally identified with form, that's all they know, totally identified with their mind, every thought form that comes into, every thought which is a thought form, it comes into their head, they are completely identified with it, they are in the grip of form and then they are surrounded by countless forms and each form in their life situation demands attention, this matters, this matters, the phone rings, I need to do this now, I need to do that, completely absorbed by form and everything is serious, has a heaviness and a seriousness to it. And the more you go on living like that, the heavier and the more serious your life becomes.

It's a loss of balance, so and then all you end up with, this is the subject matter of many movies that you see, is people who are totally trapped on that dimension only of form, complete absence of transcendence in their life. And sometimes these films are quite nice, you see, what a pity that there's not the slightest glimpse of any transcendence, they're trapped in their little life situations. And so for life to be balanced, there needs to be attention on consciousness, the underlying essence of life is formless consciousness.

Oh, and that means your sense of identity comes from there, the true sense, so you don't need the world of form anymore to give you your sense of self, because as the Buddha said, when you identify with, when you are looking for yourself in things, I'm giving a very free translation of Buddha, when you identify with the world of form and looking for yourself in forms, in your thoughts, in your possessions, in your achievements, in other people's opinion of who you are, whatever form it is, if you're looking for yourself or some kind of completion of your sense of self in form, you're going to suffer. That's the message of the Buddha, because there is no self in these things.

You cannot find yourself. Now Buddhism says, because there is no self. Hinduism will tell you, talks about the self, but they're really talking about the same thing.

It's a formless self. Now whether you say no self or formless self doesn't make any difference. These are just pointers, you may prefer one pointer to the other.

I prefer this finger pointing to the moon, and then another says no, this finger pointing to the moon is much nicer. It doesn't matter, the moon matters. And so we lie in the lap of immense intelligence.

It is within and without. We are pervaded by it. It fills the entire space of the universe.

We lie in the lap of immense intelligence which makes us organs of its activity and receivers of its truth if we are open to it. It's like having a house. If you close the shutters, no matter how bright the sunlight is, it can't come in.

It doesn't mean the shutters are more powerful than the sunlight, it just means shutters are closed. And so if a human being is closed, the vast intelligence cannot operate or can only operate as a trickle. Everybody has a trickle of it, otherwise they wouldn't be alive.

So everybody has a little trickle of that coming into their lives, but the full power of it in most people's lives is missing. So they live not knowing what vast power is available to them or to put it more accurately, what vast power they themselves are. It's not available to you that creates a separation.

It is, in essence, who you are. Now I'd like to read to you a little thing that came to Emerson when he was sitting in his study and outside there were roses growing outside his window. And here again we come to the power of nature that we talked about the other day, the power of nature to reconnect you with being.

And so he looked at the rose and then he saw this or realized this. The context of this is that he's talking about people who are always quoting ancient texts only. They are not open to the power of the divine coming through them.

They are quoting from the Bible and they are quoting from other scriptures, not realizing that the very power that spoke then is in them now also. It's just a question of opening yourself to it. And then he looked at the roses under his window.

The roses under my window make no reference to former roses or to better ones. They are for what they are. They exist with God today.

There is no time to them. They are simply the rose. It is perfect in every moment of its existence.

Before a leaf bud has burst, its whole life acts. In the full-blown flower there's no more. In the leafless root there's no less.

Its nature is satisfied and it satisfies nature in all moments alike. There is no time to it, but man postpones or remembers. He does not live in the present, but with reverted eye laments the past or heedless of the riches that surround him, stands on tiptoe to foresee the future.

He cannot be happy and strong until he too lives with nature in the present above time. There you have the rose teaching Emerson how to live, and then he put it into words. And this shows us that he actually, it was not just a superficial look at a rose as one would normally, oh, what a nice rose.

There was a true, he truly gave attention to the rose and realized how absolutely present the rose is, how absolutely devoid of time it is, carrying no past and no future. And he recognized that, the same as Jesus did when he said, look at the flowers of the field, look at the lilies. When he said that, he didn't just say, have a look at the lilies, he said, really

look, give it your full attention, and then you will realize something there, that human beings, there's a connectedness with being.

They haven't gone out as far as humans. They have not left the source of all life. They have not become as differentiated as the humans have, so therefore what they can teach us, show us, is the connectedness with the source of all life.

And that's what he saw when he looked at the rose. And then he realized that we can, when we reconnect with that, we don't just become, go back to the vegetative realm, which is beautiful for everything vegetative there, but not for us. It's not our destiny to go back to become a rose or a tree or a blade of grass.

We transcend the thinking stage. We transcend the differentiation of the thinking stage and we then regain the oneness that was once lost, that ancient mythologies point to as the lost paradise. And when you regain something, as I often point out, you regain it at a deeper level with knowing, consciousness.

And so the last sentence here is important. He saw here, of course, that usually man does not live in the present but with reverted eyes, reverted eyes. He doesn't look at what's right here.

He reverts his eyes and looks, laments the past. Oh dear, regrets about what happened, guilt, regret, memories, things went wrong in my life situation, this happened, that happened. Or heedless of the riches that surround him, stands on tiptoe to foresee the future.

I need to get, I need to get there. Where is it? I need to get to the next moment.

You're heedless of the riches that surround you that are part of the now. So the lesson then is to truly look so that something imparts itself to you from anything natural. So the anything natural can reconnect you with being.

By the way, when he uses, he wrote in the 19th century so there was still a tendency for there to use male pronouns, the same as the Bible and so on. So obviously when he says man he means man and woman and he tends to use the masculine pronoun. So you have to excuse that.

Man is a stream whose source is hidden. Always our being is descending into us from we know not whence. Most humans regard themselves as a surface phenomenon.

You're here, no sense of deeper connectedness with life. You're here like as if somebody had put you here on this planet and there's me and there's the rest of the world, the rest of the universe. The lack of connectedness.

If you go deeper within and you do it by finding the dimension of stillness underneath

thinking, then you connect with the source, the depth within yourself. And there's vast depth. Man is a stream whose source is hidden.

And when, once it's open, so all you have to really do, if you can even call it doing, is open the door. And even that is not a doing because really keeping the door closed through continuous thinking is the doing. So it's more like a stop doing and then it opens.

In that sense some of those teachers are right saying you can't do anything because it's the doing that obscures the being. And so once that is open then you gradually learn to do and be at the same time. You can act without losing connect.

At first you find it only in still moments, perhaps in nature, and you go, ah, ah. And then gradually you see if you can stay connected when you're going shopping for food, supermarkets, or traveling from here to there, carrying alertness, alert presence, rather than continuously thinking entity, always about the next moment or the last moment. This is the only, you may have noticed that I only ever talk about one thing.

And this is it. Now he uses in one of his essays the term the over-soul. And by over-soul he means the unity of all things, the unity, the oneness of all things.

All things are ultimately one. Not only that all things are connected to everything else, which physicists now tell us is actually the case. There's no division between this body and this table and this flower and those other bodies.

There's no real division on the subatomic realm. And so not only is everything connected with everything else, a web of interconnectedness, but also everything is connected to a common source. It has come out of the common source.

It returns to the common source, which is formless and timeless, and the common source remains in every form as its innermost essence. And so this common source, this unity he calls the over-soul. And he says, that unity, that over-soul, within which every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other, that common heart of which all sincere conversation is the worship, to which all right action is submission, that overpowering reality which confutes our tricks and talents and constrains everyone to pass for what he is and to speak from his character, which means from his essence, and not from his tongue, and whichever more tends and aims to pass into our thought and hand and become wisdom and virtue and power and beauty. We live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles.

Meantime, within man is the soul of the whole, the wise silence, the universal beauty to which every part and particle is equally related, the eternal one. And this deep power in which we exist and whose beatitude is all accessible to us is not only self-sufficing and perfect in every hour, but the act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and the spectacle, the subject and the object are one. We see the world piece by piece as the

sun, the moon, the animal, the tree.

But the whole of which these are the shining parts is the soul, the oneness, oneness, seeing the oneness behind the multiplicity, seeing the oneness of all forms in every form. And what he calls the soul, we could also use the word, the consciousness, the one unconditioned consciousness that pervades the entire universe, the one reality. So when he says here, the soul, if you want to use consciously a different pointer, that's fine.

All goes to show that the soul in man is not an organ, but animates and exercises all the organs, is not a function like the power of memory, of calculation, of comparison, but uses these as hands and feet, is not a faculty but a light, is not the intellect or the will, but the master of the intellect and the will, is the vast background of our being in which they lie, an immensity not possessed and that cannot be possessed.

From within or from behind, a light shines through us upon things and makes us aware that we are nothing but the light is all. The background, the background space, consciousness, looks through these eyes, speaks through this mouth, becomes form and yet remains untouched as a formless. So can you go through life dealing with a foreground of things that need doing, things that you need occasionally to think about and yet remain aware of the background to your life, the consciousness, the light of consciousness or the space in which everything appears.

Another way of putting it, can you be aware that you are aware at this moment? Can you sense the awareness underneath what you are perceiving with your senses at this moment, without which there would be no perception? Can you sense the awareness underneath any kind of emotional feeling you might be having at this moment?

Can you sense the awareness out of which any thought that might arise in your mind at this moment comes and dissolves back into the presence that you are? That's the formless, that's the timeless and so that is the vast background of your being, an immensity not possessed and that cannot be possessed. A man is the facade of a temple wherein all wisdom and all good abide.

What you see is the facade of the temple, not only what you see as the physical form of this human being but also the psychological form of this human being is also the facade still of the temple. It is not in essence who that being is. What we commonly call man or woman, the eating, drinking, planting and counting man, eating, drinking, planting, counting, doing all kinds of things, what we commonly call man, the eating, drinking, planting, counting man does not, as we know him, represent himself but misrepresents himself.

Him we do not respect but the soul whose organ he is, would he let it appear through his action, would make our knees bend. When it breathes through his intellect, it is genius. When it breathes through his will, it is virtue.

When it flows through his affection, it is love. And the blindness of the intellect begins when it would be something of itself. The weakness of the will begins when the individual would be something of himself.

So the blindness of the intellect begins with the belief that you are something of yourself. That is the mind, the self-serving mind. The weakness of the will begins when the individual would be something of himself.

That is the ego. Believing that you are an independent, autonomous, self-sufficient entity that has been put into this world from somewhere, not realizing you have come out of it, and you are an intrinsic part of the totality. And so there comes the sense of separateness, of alienation.

With that comes the continuous neediness of the ego, and with that comes the continuous underlying fear. It is always there when you are not connected. There is fear no matter what you may have achieved in the world of form.

The fear will not leave you until the sense of separateness leaves you. You reconnect. Well, wonderful to see that all spiritual teachings in essence are one.

This is why I love to go back to some of the ancient books, and they might use very different words, but once you recognize the truth in yourself, you see the truth wherever it comes, in whatever form it comes, and you say, yes, there it is. I recognize it. And so this is sometimes being called the perennial philosophy.

There is a thread that goes back thousands of years, the same truth being expressed in different words and different forms throughout the ages, in the past by very rare individuals here and there, but somehow it survived in whatever form they left behind, writing, or it survived. Somehow there were always enough humans who had at least an inkling that there was something extremely precious and valuable there. So that's the perennial philosophy that, I don't know who first used that word, there is a very wonderful book by Aldous Huxley of the same title, Perennial Philosophy.

So the truth is there, and there's no arguing once you have it in yourself. You don't attach yourself to the form in which it's being expressed, that's what religions traditionally do. You get attached to the form, not realizing the form points to an underlying essence, which is one.

All religions are one, and you don't even need a religion to see the essence. You are enough. If you have a religion, fine, you don't need it.

But if you use it rightly, it can take you deeper. If you use it wrongly, you get more entangled in ego through your religion. There is no bar or wall in the soul where man, the effect ceases, and God, the cause begins.

There is no separation between you and the source. It's a continuous, you could almost think of it, if you think of it visually, you're connected. If you're walking around a globe, and every being on the globe is connected to the center with a thread, it's a visual representation of it.

You're connected. Now, if the surface reality of where you're walking around is all you have, then you see the separation between you and the other human being or other life form. You see the separateness.

When you are aware of the center within, then you see the unity. So, you're walking around this globe, there's one human being, here's another human being, disconnected because they're only aware of the surface. If you're aware of the depths within yourself, then suddenly you see that you are one with the other.

You're connected at the center. That's a visual, of course, somewhat incomplete representation. The sovereignty of this nature whereof we speak is made known by its independency of those limitations which circumscribe us on every hand.

The soul circumscribes all things. As I have said, it contradicts all experience. In like manner, it abolishes time and space.

The influence of the senses has, in most men, overpowered the mind to that degree that the walls of time and space have come to look solid, real, and insurmountable. And to speak with levity of these limits is, in the world, a sign of insanity. Yet time and space are but inverse measures of the force of the soul.

A man is capable of abolishing them both. You could say, now when he uses inverse measures, you could say, I said that somewhere also, the vastness of space that you see when you look out at night into this clear sky, and that was when I was a child even before, no, about the same time when I had mentioned previously, I would often go out into nature to reconnect with being when I was a child. And one other thing I did that helped me when I was a child, and that didn't happen until I went to live in Spain at the age of 13 and a half, where often the sky is clear, especially in the summer.

And so we lived on the top floor with a, I would climb up onto the roof of the building at night and lie in a deck chair and just look at the vastness of the night sky. And I didn't realize at that time that my mind actually became still. I was just in a state of awe, and I didn't realize at the time I didn't even know anything about meditation.

I didn't know I was in a state of meditative stillness. And there was a sense of awe and of feeling speechless. And what made me speechless was not the, well, it was wonderful to all the thousands of points of light that we call stars or suns, but more than that, the vastness of the space itself.

I already knew a little bit. I was interested in astronomy, and I started reading, and I

knew a little bit about the vast distances involved there and the vastness of space, of what a light year is. And it was so inconceivable and totally beyond anything the mind could understand.

Even the greatest scientists cannot understand limitless space. So I sometimes ask myself, well, what is beyond space? And if it's limitless, it's inconceivable.

There's a vastness there that is totally ungraspable and inconceivable. And that, I believe, what he's pointing at, Emerson, here, is what you see as the vastness of space is the externalized vastness of your own being, of being itself. You see it spreading, spread out there.

It contains all things. It's the externalized vastness of consciousness itself. And it appears to us as space.

Now space, of course, is nothing, really. It just enables everything to be, but in itself it is no thing. It is nothing.

So, and time equally, the vast stretches of time, inconceivable. And does time have an end? Does time have a beginning?

And here, too, what we perceive as endless vast time is the externalization of the timeless within. And that gets stretched out when we go into the sense-perceived world. It gets stretched out like, it becomes skimmed milk.

The cream is within you, and then the universe is the skimmed milk, diluted. So that also can put you in touch with yourself. Just look into contemplation of space.

It doesn't have, it could be the space of the night sky. It could even be the space of an inner room. If you go into an ancient church or cathedral, it's particularly beautiful to have to be, if you become aware of, but any room will do it, become aware of, okay, what's the essence of this room?

There's the floor, the ceiling, the walls, the chairs, the furniture in it, the people. Okay, but is there more to it? Yes, of course there's more to it.

What really matters about this room is the space. Without the space, there wouldn't be a room. And there's usually, people would not be aware of the space, they would be aware only of what's in the space, the furniture, the walls, the people, whatever it is.

And so if you can become aware not only of what's in the space and what circumscribes the space, but the space itself, the awareness of space creates in you the awareness of the formless within you. Because only the moment you become aware of space around you, and I can't tell you how, you just have to do it, because there's nothing to grasp, there's nothing to be aware of. So the mind asks, how can I be aware of space if there's

nothing there to be aware of?

And that's precisely it. What is left when you're aware of something where there's nothing? What's left is awareness itself.

That's why being aware of space is such a powerful thing, because what you really become aware of then is awareness, nothing, no content. And so it's a beautiful meditation, wherever you go, you can do it, there's even a line in the Tao Te Ching which speaks of what, I don't, I can't remember literally, that it says, there's a bowl and the essence of the vessel or the bowl is the emptiness inside the space. And so to make it a bowl, there's the two aspects, and these are the two aspects to every life form, form and formless.

Form and the essence, the formless. And so if you can be aware that that applies to you also, just like the bowl or like the room, in yourself also there is content, there's furniture inside you, thoughts, some people have a lot of furniture inside, room is just crammed full with furniture, one thought after another. And so, but there must be some space there because the furniture somehow has to get in there, so space is there, you just have to know it's there, there is space inside you already, you don't have to produce it or achieve it somehow, just realize it's already there because otherwise nothing could be there in your mind.

The mind itself in essence is space, which is consciousness. So most people are so seduced by the furniture, so seduced by all these fascinating bits of furniture or furniture they complain about, they don't want but it's there, and so that they're never aware of the space around the furniture inside themselves. What a limitation, which means all you're stuck with is your life situation, your limited life situation, which consists of content, content, the content of your life.

And no matter what you do with the content of your life, it's never satisfying. On the level of content alone, you will always come to a point of frustration because you never, no matter how you rearrange the furniture, I'm using of course, as you know, furniture as a metaphor for everything in your mind, no matter how you arrange the furniture or even if you throw some bits out and take other bits in, you always find it's not quite it. You always very quickly come to a point of dissatisfaction because the transcendent dimension is missing from your life.

And what is the transcendent dimension? The formless space. Not realize that that is the essence of who you actually are.

And so people go through life frustrated, complaining that the world isn't doing what it should be doing to make them happy, not realizing the world cannot make you happy. It's not in the, it's not in its power because the world is a world of form. It can challenge you so that you go deeper and finally find the formless.

That's what it's there for really. And of course the world is good at that. It always does that.

And once you know that, then every challenge you can actually welcome. And every loss you can actually, even though you might weep, you can still welcome it because you can see how precious loss also is. Because what is loss in whatever form?

Loss is some form has been removed from your life and has left behind an empty space. And that happens when somebody close to you dies. Suddenly there's an empty space.

And that is, from the point of view of form, is very painful. And of course you will cry, you will weep, because there is the reality of form, but there's also the deeper reality of the formless. And if you can be with both, then in the presence of death, although you may weep, there will be a deep peace that you sense because the formless shines through the space that's left behind.

And that's the sacred, the divine, God, whatever you want to call it. It shines through. Wherever there's loss, there's grace.

The grace is something has opened up. And that's the essence, that is the essence of the form that passed away also. And that is the indestructible.

That is the deathless, as it's in Buddhism, the closest Buddhism ever gets to talking about God is death, the deathless realm, Amaravati, the deathless. That's how wonderful to see. And then balance comes into your life.

The dance between form and formlessness. The dance between the world and spirit, if you want to call it that. I don't use it very often, it's too many associations there.

And then the beautiful thing is the world is no longer a frustrating place. When you realize that the world was actually meant to be frustrating, it's no longer frustrating. Then you recognize whatever challenge comes, you say, oh, okay, either you resist or you go deeper.

That's always a choice. There's a beautiful line in a book, I believe it's called *The Road Less Traveled*, and it has the best first sentence or first two sentences of any book. That's why I never read the whole book.

It says more or less this, life is difficult, and when you know that and accept that, it's no longer difficult. It's so simple. Once you know you don't expect something that the world cannot give you, happiness, fulfillment, peace, and once you realize you don't need the world to give you that because that is already, that emanates from the formless dimension within yourself, then, ironically, maybe the universe has a sense of humor or irony, then, ironically, the world and the things of the world are actually quite nice.

They're quite satisfying, and you appreciate them. It's not that you deny. I don't believe that those areas of ancient practices that almost aggressively deny the reality of form are that helpful.

I don't think you can get to the, find the formless within by fighting or aggressively denying the world of form. The world of form is also an expression, it's all an expression of the one, and so the world then becomes a much, a place where you can appreciate whatever form is around you arises, no matter whether it's large or small. Mostly it's small because mostly your life consists of small things.

There's a flower, there's the shopping to do, there's go from here to there, get into the car, take one step at a time. It's all small, really, and you can appreciate the preciousness of all the things in your life, and it's suddenly what before was frustrating now is actually quite pleasant. Why has it become pleasant?

You no longer demand from the world, which includes places you go to, which includes people you meet or have relationships with, which includes situations in your life that arise, which includes achievements, successes or failures, whatever. You don't demand that they should give you what they can't, and you can let them be, you can honor them, but you never, you're not again going to a situation or place and say, I demand that you fulfill me, or go into a relationship and say, I demand that you make me happy. Or whatever condition you encounter, some success and expect ultimate fulfillment through it, no, briefly, yes, and then things happen.

So with this comes then the freedom, freedom from, you could call it freedom from the world. It doesn't mean you disengage from the world, but your attachment to things lessens and then goes. There is appreciation, there is honoring the beauty of life, the beauty of even the smallest things, yes, but without the attachment to that, you don't need that anymore, and you can let go when it's time to let go.

This always comes, wherever you go and whatever you do, at some point it's time to let go, and to the, as long as there's attachment, it's a painful thing when life says, okay, let go now, no, no I can't, it's part of who I am, and that's painful, and then life may even tear it out of your hands, it's even more painful, but it could be so simple, you could say, there you go, and then some other form appears, oh, that's nice, and you know full well there's nothing that is yours ultimately.

The whole thing that you can possess something is, of course, an illusion. You only, for a little while, it comes into, you look after it, and then you hand it on, you look after it, pass it on, let's see what freedom, and then you appreciate the beauty of all things, and you see beauty where before you didn't see beauty, also in the smallest things, and you don't have to take acid for that, but of course the truth is everything around you is intensely alive and beautiful. It's only the judgmental mind that creates the screen, a barrier of conceptualization between yourself and the aliveness of the world, but the

essential aliveness is within in the formless, so don't look for the aliveness in there, nature can hint at it, can connect you with own aliveness. Yes, the essence of all life is within.

The action of the soul or consciousness is oftener in that which is felt and left unsaid than in that which is said in any conversation. It's not in the words, it's in the spaces. It broods over every society and they unconsciously seek for it in each other.

You unconsciously seek the formless in the other. We know better than we do. We do not yet possess ourselves and we know at the same time that we are much more.

I feel the same truth how often in my trivial conversation with my neighbours that somewhat higher in each of us overlooks this by-play and Jove nods to Jove from behind each of us. God nods to God from behind each of us. You're engaged in superficial conversation, but there's something in the background that far transcends anything in the world of form which includes words and thoughts.

And if you can sense that in yourself, then you can also sense it in the other. And if you sense that in the other, all relationships become holy relationships, as the Course in Miracles would put it. And you recognize the holy in every relationship, even if it's a brief one.

And there is something in you that knows and recognizes the truth. We know truth when we see it. Let skeptic and scoffer say what they choose.

Foolish people ask you when you have spoken what they do not wish to hear. How do you know it is truth and not an error of your own? We know truth when we see it, as opposed to opinion, as we know when we are awake that we are awake.

Do you know that you are awake? Yes, you must be. So this is direct realization.

So if you know that you are awake, that means what is it that you really know? You know that you're awake. You can subtract anything that appears in your consciousness at this moment, any form, and you could then be left with just the state of being awake.

And there's the formless. One more sentence. Under all this running sea of circumstance, whose waters ebb and flow with perfect balance, lies the aboriginal abyss of real being.

Circumstances, situations, world of form, comings, goings. Underneath it all, the timeless, formless. Become familiar with the state of not needing to continuously interpret and judge what is happening to you or around you.

You don't need that. You actually become more intelligent when you don't continuously and compulsively interpret what's happening or what's in front of you, what you're perceiving. That's an old habit going back thousands and thousands of years.

And the habit says, no, I have to interpret. I become stupid if I don't. I won't know what's going on anymore if I can't judge this person that I'm meeting, or I can have some kind of opinion I like or dislike this situation, or this, I want this, I don't want this, should be happening, that shouldn't.

All the stuff that the mind produces continuously that detracts from the simplicity and power of the present moment, that the mind puts out the screen of conceptualization. And so in living without the compulsive screen of conceptualization is the great liberation. And so you invite into your life the spaces, spaces, the one space really, but spaces of not knowing, not needing to know, not just being present with what is, just giving attention to what is at this moment.

Which implies, of course, accepting the is-ness of whatever this moment brings, whatever form arises in this moment. Can you say yes to what arises in whatever form? Because if you, you should say yes because otherwise you suffer.

Because what is already is. So if you argue internally with what is, you really make the universe into an enemy. I don't want this, but there it is right in front of you.

You say, okay, this is what is. You become the space for it. And that's a very quick way of accessing the space consciousness in you.

By simply bringing an acceptance into the present moment in whatever form it comes. Where before there was an irritation, where before there was a complaint, where before there was an angry reaction, there's now saying, oh, okay, that's what is. You open your arms and say yes to now.

Present moment is my friend. I've had the enemy, present moment has been my enemy for long enough. I'm now making friends with the present moment.

Why? Because that's all I have. There's nothing else ever.

Why not make friends with the present moment in whatever form it appears? And the little, the secret then, of course, the miracle is if you make friends with the present moment no matter in what form it appears, then the formless opens up within you because you become who you already were, space for it. You are the space for that.

That's all. So the primordial spiritual practice, or if you want a mantra, can I be the space for this? You can ask yourself the question when situations arise that before you might have complained about, been irritated about, whatever the reaction would have been, can I be the space for this?

And usually, or I would say always, you will find yes, I can be this. You just forgot that you can be the space for it. You forgot that you are the space for whatever arises in your life because you are the now, you are the consciousness in which it arises.

So you become who you already are. Can I be the space for this? With that is the end of all irritation or angry reactions or complaining, inner no, don't want this, want something else, yeah, but this is what you have now.

And it doesn't mean that you get stuck with what is. The amazing thing is you move on much more quickly when you bring a yes to the present moment. Then life moves on.

You've passed the test. If you bring no to the present moment, means you haven't passed. Okay, you get stuck.

It's all expressed beautifully in the film Groundhog Day. You can live in resistance. You can try whatever you will.

As long as you are stuck in your negativity, you have to do it the lesson again. You wake up the same day. This protagonist wakes up in the same day every day until finally an inner shift happens and he begins to say yes to the present moment.

And then suddenly all the unpleasantness of this day that he has to repeat again and again, all the unpleasantness of that day becomes actually quite pleasant. He's beginning to help people because he says yes to situations. So he becomes a helpful, beneficial presence in that day and suddenly everybody loves him in that town.

And finally he becomes so accepting whereas before he hated where he was and he hated his work. Many people live like that, hating everything, complaining continuously, nothing and nobody's ever good enough. And then suddenly the shift happens and finally he's in the same place and he says to his girlfriend, oh let's stay here, it's quite nice.

And then suddenly he's free and he's no longer forced to repeat the same day. Deep spiritual lesson in there and that's how it is. So it's the egoic mind tells you if you accept what is, you'll be stuck.

This is not the case. Acceptance is the beginning for powerful action if action is required. And non-acceptance, the action that you take on the basis of non-acceptance is never powerful.

It always is tainted with negativity and you could say I call it karmic action. It produces more unhappiness, more karma. So a very quick way then of accessing the space consciousness within, the formless, is not resisting the form that the present moment takes in your life internally.

Wow, huge shift. When you can try it in this evening, there may be little things happening on your way home. Wow, non-resistance, greatest power there is.

Marina asks from North Carolina, in my efforts to be in the now, I find I'm able to reach a state of peace and connectedness. I think that I wouldn't call it effort but I know what

you mean. It feels complete and fulfilling and yet there's a voice in my mind saying that to be truly connected I should find a way to be in service to others.

Can you help me understand the role that being in service to others plays in the evolutionary impulse of the universe? Thank you for bringing a ray of hope to humanity. It is an interesting synchronicity to me that the day of your program launch is also my birthday.

Happy birthday. The evolutionary impulse of the universe, the arising of presence, you cannot not be of service to others as presence arises, one way or another. The way in which you are of service to others will vary from person to person.

You may not immediately know what your way is. Again, the mind sometimes wants to know too soon, okay, what am I going to do with it now? Be present and gradually the realization of how you are to serve others, whether it's through direct spiritual teaching or whether it's through some activity into which the energy frequency of presence flows, you don't know.

It may come to you, it might take a while. It took years for this teaching to come out of the state of presence, so many years. It may take a while or it may happen very quickly.

There is an acceleration happening on the planet now of the arising of presence, so it's probably happening more quickly to you than to me. How to be of service to others, whether it's through direct spiritual teaching or some activity, they will come to you either through an external circumstance that will tell you what it is that you need to do. It can come from the outside as a synchronistic event, and many people are telling me that they're finding that things that are just right as they live more and more in presence come into their lives.

The right offer, the right meeting, the right person, and suddenly what it is that you need to do arises from the outside. It comes or you wake up one morning and with the realization of this is what I need to do, and then I would wait and see just to make sure that it comes from a deep enough place, and if it's still there the next day and a week later and there's a deep sense of peace with it and power, then it comes from a deep place and then it's good to act on it. This is how I got taken away from living in England.

I loved England, but one morning I knew I have to remove myself without knowing why, and it was so strong that I removed myself. I knew I had to go to the west coast of North America, not knowing why, and it took a while before I got rid of everything, removed myself, landed on the west coast. What now?

I don't know, and so I sat there for a few weeks in presence, and the mind, yes, came in occasionally and said, this is, why did you come here? And the mind even got to, started to look at ads for flying back to England, fares, and then at some point the impulse came

to buy a notepad, carried the notepad, not home, I didn't have a home, somebody had put me up, and there in his kitchen the pen came and a very strong impulse came to write, and I wrote, what is enlightenment? Somebody had once asked me that, but I hadn't, I remembered more or less what I said, but that was a new stream that came, and I'd written one page and I knew, this is a book, it's coming, and so there was simply something I couldn't have predicted, obedience to what came out of the present moment, and the trust to go just into the, with a limited amount of money, into complete unknown, but don't do it on an impulse that is a restless kind of impulse that comes out of any kind of negative emotion, and see if it's still with you after a while, then it's right, it's peaceful and it's powerful.

It seemed the book could only be written on the west coast of North America because of the energy field there. I realized that later when I went back to England, the writing stopped, I could only do editing, and so all kinds of things, people will be called upon to serve in all kinds of capacities according to your abilities. It may be that you produce something artistic or music that is inspiring to many people, whatever it is, we don't know.

It may be that you set up a business and everybody who comes there is greeted for who they are, so you recognize everybody as spirit, as consciousness, and everybody who comes away from your business feels lighter and more themselves. Many things can be used as excuses for spiritual transmission and spiritual teaching, and if you already have some business or some activity, it is quite possible that this could continue to be used then as a vehicle for transmission of spiritual energy, and then it will become empowered. Beautiful thing.

There's no predicting how this will change your life, except that it will change your life, and even if some people may not remove themselves, they may stay where they are, and yet it will change. It might not change what you do, but it will fundamentally change how you do what you do. That's always the most important thing.

It's not what you do, it's how you do it. What is the consciousness that flows into it? Is it the egoic consciousness or is it the unconditioned consciousness?

[Speaker 3] (7:31:14 - 7:32:00)

Eckhart, I've heard you make reference to a number of situations which I think convey the same idea. You've talked about certain cultures that go through a stage where this thought process becomes more developed, which I interpret in some ways as being almost a loss of innocence. Is it necessary for a culture or a stage of civilization to go through this process of losing innocence, of getting trapped in the thought and emotional process, in order then to regain the development of awareness to reach a stage of enlightenment?

Thank you, thank you.

[Speaker 1] (7:32:04 - 7:46:05)

That seems to be the process when we look at it. There are still remnants of ancient cultures, very few these days, who have not gone through that process of loss of innocence or loss of connectedness with being, we could call it, the natural connectedness with being. And a few humans may still have it, very simple people, perhaps who live close to the land, never left.

Very simple people sometimes still have it in some cultures, a natural connectedness with the root of life, with being. They feel they are rooted in themselves, there's a stillness there. That is the natural.

What is happening when you lose it, whether it's an individual or whether it's a whole culture, a whole civilization, when you lose it, then you get lost in problem making, get lost in mind, the loss of original innocence, you could say, which of course is replaced by what is called in Christianity, original sin, which simply means the dysfunction that we all inherit, that is there in the collective.

So the original innocence is replaced by the original sin. Original innocence, however, is much deeper than original sin. Original innocence is always still there, even when original sin comes in, it only covers up the original innocence, it does not destroy the original innocence.

So the original innocence remains and then a human being, either an individual or a whole nation, culture, tribe, moves through the phase of being identified with mind, ego, thinking, problem making, conflict-ridden, suffering life. Suffering, inflicting suffering on other humans around you, continuous violence, and so on. All that is part of the loss of connectedness with being.

That's why so many ancient cultures and this, the innocent state, we once were in that. Many ancient myths exist in different cultures throughout the world that speak of the golden age, something, a time when everything was beautiful. We have it in Indian mythology.

At the beginning, humans, they say, lived in connectedness. I'm paraphrasing, but they were one with life, one with the divine. There were no, they didn't inflict suffering on others.

There was no violence. There was, that was, and many cultures have that myth still. It survived as a myth.

It's also expressed, of course, in the Bible, at the beginning of the Bible, like a paradise, the loss of paradise. And paradise, of course, is not a place. It's a state.

So the loss, is it necessary? Well, it's happening. It has happened and is happening.

So it seems to be an evolutionary process. When innocence is regained, connectedness with being is regained, it is not the same as the state, as that state that was lost. And that perhaps is why it is necessary to go through the state of being lost.

When it is regained, it is regained at a deeper level. There's a great deepening. Innocence is you're fully conscious of your state, rather than living in that room.

For example, this is reflected in your relationship with nature. As your consciousness changes, first, let's say, in the innocent state, there's a oneness with nature and a respect for nature, as the old civilizations had, as the Native Americans had, a respect for nature. They recognized nature as alive with spirit force.

They recognized that the tree is not just a dead object that I can use for making money or for my benefit or to build a house or whatever. They recognized the tree is alive with something more than what you see. And they respected that life.

Every animal, even if they had to kill an animal, they respected the life that is in the spirit presence in the animal. So everything, they inhabited a universe that was alive with presence. Now, then we lost that, and more and more, we began to inhabit a universe that we were deadened ourselves to the aliveness of the universe.

We can't see it anymore. So that we ended up looking at the whole of nature as a utilitarian thing to be used, but no longer recognized the essential aliveness that is in everything in nature. Why couldn't we recognize it anymore, that it is essentially sacred and essentially one with the life that we are, because we had lost that within ourselves.

We had cut ourselves off from the root of being. We were completely trapped in mind, and then nature became dead, and we could then exploit it, do anything, because we didn't know that there's a sacred presence there. We've lost the sacred presence within ourselves.

Well, it was covered up. Then we regain it. Then again nature is alive, but this time there is the added dimension of conscious awareness.

When you've always lived in oneness with nature, you don't even know that you live in oneness with nature. It's totally natural. But when you do it with full consciousness, there is an added dimension to it.

And so this is what's happening, and this seems to be why the process is that we have to move through the stage of being lost and then regaining. Perhaps the truth of that is expressed in the parable of the prodigal son, which predates, actually, it's used in various cultures, even when Jesus used it. It exists in different forms.

The son of a rich father says to the father, give me my inheritance. I want to go out and make a life for myself. And so the father says, okay, you go out into the world, and the son goes out in the world, squanders his wealth, becomes a destitute, and becomes a beggar, and even forgets where he comes from.

And then eventually the father sends messengers to the son to remind him who he is. Don't you remember that you are? And the beggar says, no, me, the son of the king?

No, don't. And gradually the memory comes back to him, and then he comes back to his father's house, and the father now loves him more than before. That's the story.

So there's a deepening, what that parable means, there's a deepening after you've been lost. When you regain that which has been lost, it is regained at a deeper level because you're now fully conscious of it. There's a conscious dimension, the awareness that is there.

That's why that seems to be our destiny. But perhaps there is no... I just know that this is how it is.

There may be exceptions. There may be certain people on the planet or small groups of people who don't go through it. Who knows?

We'll have to see. I can only see the general trend, the general movement seems to be, yes, we have to go through that. There may well be exceptions to that.

There may well be certain people who remain in the state of innocence, and that is wonderful too. I don't know. So that's the paradise regained.

That is the cycle. And so I know that I had to go through it. You had to go through it or are still going through it.

And so the state of innocence is lost in childhood. Every child is still born with it, but then very quickly these days it is lost. Well, no, it's never lost.

It's obscured. That's the journey. From an anonymous questioner.

I have read that as long as we are in a body, we have a shadow. Is this true for you? What is your shadow?

Let me think. What is your shadow? Do you have a shadow?

Okay. The answer is, part one of the answer is yes. Part two of the answer is, if you ask anybody if they have a shadow, and they say no, then you know that they have a shadow.

And if they say yes, they don't. Because shadow, which is just a way, it's a Jungian term,

which I don't normally use, but what it means is an area of unconsciousness that you're not aware of. Because if you're aware of it, it's no longer unconscious.

It's not really a shadow. So if it's an area of unconsciousness in your life, and if it's truly a shadow or an area of unconsciousness, then, of course, you won't know it. You might know there's a certain behavior pattern, but you will not recognize it as an area of unconsciousness.

You might say, of course I get furious every time somebody mentions this or that because, and you have some justification, it's not recognized as an unconscious reactive pattern. Or you might be totally unconscious of it and say, I'm never angry. Why do you accuse me of always being angry?

So it's right there, but you don't know it. You deny it. So the shadow then, anybody who says no, they probably have one.

If they say yes, then they have seen that there are certain areas where there are certain behavior patterns still operating. Of course they are, because as long as somebody has a body, certain patterns operate, certain behavior patterns. You might have idiosyncrasies, ways of doing things.

So if you're aware that that's there, then that's all that it is. It's not a totally conscious thing. It's not a shadow as such.

We can talk also in terms of ego. If you're aware of certain patterns in you that originated from ego, and they still operate to some extent, although you live mostly in awareness, sometimes there's a momentum behind certain behavior patterns. Like they're not being energized anymore, but it's still there.

And so if you're aware of it, it's not really the ego anymore. Ego implies unobserved mind. Ego implies you don't know it's the ego.

There's no awareness. There's just the conditioned mind doing its thing, acting out. The moment you bring awareness to it, there's a light on it.

So if the light shines, it's shining on the shadow. It's not a shadow. Shadow means there's an absence of light, and light means consciousness.

So ego is no longer ego when you know there's ego. It's only truly speaking ego when you don't know it, and there's unconsciousness.

[Speaker 3] (7:46:08 - 7:46:09)

Thank you.

[Speaker 1] (7:46:11 - 7:46:18)

A friend of mine got shot and died a couple days ago, so it's been on my mind.

[Speaker 3] (7:46:19 - 7:46:28)

What happens at the time of death, and where does the life force go? What is the transformation?

[Speaker 1] (7:46:30 - 7:54:57)

Thank you. Well, I haven't gone through physical death yet. As the Zen master who was asked about life after death said, I don't know.

And they said, why don't you know? You're the master. And he said, yeah, but I'm not a dead master.

But I've gone very deeply to what one could call death to identification with form. So in a way, I have gone into that realm from where I can say and know that ultimately what we see as death is the dissolution of form, that the eternal in us, which I know that firsthand, cannot be touched by that. So what exactly happens, I would say, depends on whatever state of consciousness you were in.

That must be a predominant state of consciousness in this lifetime. If in this lifetime you were continuously identified with form, your body, or the psychological form of me, that means consciousness, this expression of consciousness, was still in a somewhat dreamlike state, which is identification with form. And you can easily extrapolate from that if the tendency of consciousness to identify with form was still there, which in other ways the awakening had not happened, this tendency will continue.

There will be further identification with form, and the process will continue as the consciousness that is not yet fully awake will continue to identify with form again, and then gradually come to a place where awakening happens. Or if there has already been a disidentification from form in this lifetime, then you can extrapolate from there that the compulsive urge to identify with form and to seek another form or another cycle of form identification, this compulsion to seek further experiences through identifying with form, then would either be much weaker or be completely absent, in which case the consciousness that you are is no longer bound to this realm and will not seek to re-experience the realm of form. But in either case, I know, I can tell you that all is well. It does not really matter whether this person now needs further experiences of identification, in which case this will happen, or whether he's already free of this urge, in which case he will move on and live in a realm that we can't even conceive of from where we are here.

I get a sense deep within in the forms of what that is, but we don't need to talk about it here. All we know is nothing, this is the beginning of A Course in Miracles, which is the entire Course in Miracles summarized in two lines, nothing real can be threatened,

nothing unreal exists, herein lies the peace of God. That which is real in him is beyond form.

Anybody can know that when you see a dead body, you realize that this is no longer whom you knew, this is not the being that you knew, this is only a shell. So nothing real can be threatened, nothing unreal ultimately exists. This is why sages from all traditions speak of this realm of form as ultimately illusory, ultimately, it depends what level you look at.

The important thing is all is well, beyond the appearance on the level of form, which is the only level where death exists, it is the transition from one form into another form, or from one form into formlessness. That is what death is, no more than that, nothing real dies, nothing real dies, which is to say ultimately there is no such thing as death, there only seems to be. It's a transmutation of form, either form dissolves or seeks some other form, some other identification with form.

That for you, of course, to go into stillness in the face of death, to go into stillness is important, to become still within yourself, especially when you are sitting with somebody who is going through the death process, or you are confronted with somebody who has just died next to you, to be with that, immediately close your eyes, go into the deep stillness where you realize who you are. And once you realize who you are, which is formless consciousness, then you realize also that nothing real died. Nothing real died, which is to say ultimately there is no death.

It does not mean that you can't feel sad. You can allow yourself to feel tears and to feel sad, and at the same time realize that nothing real died. That happened to me when my parents died two years ago, within a space of six months, both of them, so to be confronted with the death of a loved one in a short period of time.

Yes, there were tears, and there was sadness, and at the same time there was the realization that ultimately there is no death, and who they were in their essence has not been destroyed. Just as I know that I, in my essence, cannot be destroyed. And so that comes from that, it comes from self-realization or self-knowledge, the realization that the other also is beyond death.

So you can have the coexistence of, yes, on this level there is a place for sadness and mourning and tears. If it happens, if it comes in waves, you may have noticed usually if somebody close to you dies, the sadness comes in waves at you, and then you cry, and then it leaves you, and then comes another wave. And even when the wave comes, there can be an undercurrent of peace.

So you're not totally in that emotion, you're not totally consumed by it, it exists there in your own spaciousness. And the spaciousness underneath the emotion is the peace. And it's only from that inner peace that you can realize the truth behind death.

[Speaker 2] (7:55:03 - 7:55:42)

I don't know how you'd label this question. I've met some people, or had conversations with people who are going through what might be called a crisis of awakening. And it seems like the identification with self is mostly fallen away.

And they're in a kind of terror. And they feel like they're going insane. And I can kind of, I mean, I'm not there myself, but I can, I've had those times when it's like giving up all control over everything feels kind of scary.

[Speaker 1] (7:55:43 - 8:07:35)

And I just wondered if you could speak to that. Okay, thank you. Yeah.

Yes, I've also encountered people like that. The mind feels suddenly scared, which really is the ego is still there to some extent. And it becomes a little panicky.

I'm not in control anymore. But there is a place, so one can lose oneself in that. But I would advise a person like that to look for a place that is not confused inside, a place that is not scared.

Many people say they're confused or scared. But really, the way out of it is really always the fuller acknowledgement of the present moment. Because the rest of it, all that confusion and feeling scared is you're not in the present moment, you're in your mind again, and your mind is saying, Oh, my life is falling apart.

I have to start worrying again, because otherwise, it's all going to fall apart. So once you realize that you've moved out, that needs to, the realization needs to be there of that. Okay, I'm lost in the mind again.

Okay, you're not lost, because you know that you're lost. The moment you realize it's happening for a while, you may not realize it's happening. You're so identified with your panicky thoughts that you're completely in them, you don't even know what's happening to you.

And then it time may pass while you're completely in your thoughts. Oh, I think I'm going mad. I just don't know.

I can't figure things out anymore. I don't. They're not, I can't work things out.

Don't know. The mind says you should have an opinion about everybody and I don't anymore. You shouldn't have an opinion about every situation you're in and your life.

I don't know what to think about my life anymore. That's dreadful. That's the mind.

And of course the opposite is true. If you don't know what to think about your life

anymore, then you're beginning to wake up and realize there's no such thing as your life. There's only life.

Your life is a mental construct. It's a story. The story of me.

So it's always the moment you realize it's happening, or if you're trying to help somebody, bring your attention to the present moment. This is the exit point out of confusion. You can't be confused when your attention moves into the present moment because the present moment is always simple.

There's always a simplicity about it. The complexity is in the mind structures, the unobserved mind of the ego. So simply take your attention into the present moment and then confusion suddenly dissolves because the mind says, I need to work something out.

I need to understand something. No, you don't. All you need to do is respond to this moment.

Either this moment may require action or it may not require action. Just be there for this moment and then it becomes simple. You cannot do more than one thing at a time, for example, in this moment.

No matter how much you have to do, you can only do one thing. Well, you can do two things, but it gets hard. Basically, you do one thing at a time and give it your attention.

Or do nothing and bring attention to sense perceptions. Look around and get a sense of what this moment feels, what it is, what does it mean, this moment. First of all, it means what you see and perceive, because that's this moment.

And that's already a revelation because you might have been so trapped in your mind that you were completely unaware of your surroundings. And you didn't realize there was a beautiful tree there and there are clouds there. You didn't realize that there's a sound of the wind outside.

You didn't realize that you are breathing in the air. You didn't realize that all those things around you are vitally alive. You didn't realize that because you were stuck in your head thinking about your problems.

And so the beginning of the present moment is that. And then you can go a little deeper. Then you can experience the present moment as the energy field in your body, as the aliveness in your body.

And then you can go even deeper and experience the present moment as the awareness of all this, rather than the present moment isn't the flower as such. The flower appears in the present moment, but essentially what the present moment is, it's the consciousness in which you see the flower. Otherwise there would be no flower.

Remove the consciousness. I don't know what's left. No flower.

You all know the famous saying, the tree in the forest, if a tree falls in the forest and there's nobody there to hear it, does it make a noise? And of course it doesn't, because noise implies not only a sensory organ, it also implies a consciousness that's perceiving through the sensory organ that brings about what we call noise. And without that there's no noise.

And you can even follow that up and ask other similar questions. But what I'm pointing to is the present moment in essence is not the things. The things appear in the space of the present moment.

It's always present moment. You can't get out of that. Your life is always one with now.

Your life and now are one. If you doubt that, then let me know one day when you can say, my life is not now. Or maybe you remember when it wasn't now.

Not possible. Life and now is synonymous. Life is now, now is life.

But the mind says, yeah, but what does that mean? Isn't that just words? No, it's more than words.

The words are pointing to a realization. And that is, whatever appears has to appear in the present moment, but in itself is not the present moment. It is a form that appears in the space of now.

Everybody in this room or wherever the body is, is a form that appears in the space of now. Whatever happens, whatever thought comes, whatever emotion is felt, is a form that appears in the space of now. And that now is consciousness, timeless, ever present.

You are that. I am that. So that's really what the present moment is.

So ultimately it's yourself, it's consciousness, and you are consciousness. So bringing attention to the now takes people out of confusion. The now begins with sense perceptions.

To encourage people, or do it to yourself, if you find you become lost in your mind, come into your senses first. Touch something. Whatever, any surface, feel it.

Then look. Already confusion subsides because your attention gets away from thinking into the act of perception. Then listen.

Less and less confusion. What is there to be confused about right here? Nothing.

Then breathing. And breathing takes attention into the inner body. Alive.

It's alive. Where's the confusion? It's gone.

You stopped giving attention to your thoughts, the confusion is gone. And then you go even deeper into just the spaciousness of stillness. No confusion in there.

And then, that's fine. Every time it happens, use that process of reorientation of focus of your consciousness into now. So this is the advice you can give, and you do it with people when they come to you in a state of confusion.

Say, okay, sit there, okay, look around, look, touch something, look at this, listen to the rain, listen to the wind, listen to the birds, listen to the car, be there as the presence for it. Confusion can end very quickly that way. Present moment is the exit point out of confusion, is the point of exit out of your mind.

And it's always there. You just have to acknowledge it. So, and when it happens again, same process, no more confusion.

It's a shift for people. You get drawn back into the old consciousness and step out again. That's why we call the awakening process.

For most people, it is a, we are transitional, most of the people going through this, we are transitional beings from, it's a very significant and incredible thing, from one way of being, one state of consciousness that's been there for thousands and thousands of years, to a different state of consciousness. And so we live, many people live in two worlds, in two states, still shifting, and gradually awareness takes over from continuous thinking. And then it's all different.

It's like, I sometimes call it as you, as I say, at the end of the new earth, a new species is emerging on the planet. One could almost say that, we still look the same, but your inner state is so different from the normal, insane state, that it's like a completely new species. And yet it's already, it's already arising in you.

It's not something that you need to arrive at at some future point. I want to become a new species. It's already arising.

[Speaker 3] (8:07:40 - 8:09:06)

For the past several years, I've been making a concerted effort to live a, especially sort of, you know, conscious, present, spiritual path, and doing yoga and meditation and retreats and that sort of thing. And now when I hear people talk about, you know, spiritual stuff, I kind of cringe. It's like, I feel like there's this spiritual thing that's like separate, you know, separate from this, you know, this special dimension.

At first it was really great, you know, because I was meditating like, you know, 10 hours in a weekend and I could tell everybody how cool it was and, you know, how special and unique I felt, you know, practicing this special spiritual life. And now I just, I listen to what you say and other people say, I just want to hear about, like, how I'm no one. And I

mean that sincerely in being in this, but just not having to, even though, you know, I am conscious, all these words that just seem to get in the way a lot of the time.

I mean, you know, they're concepts and everything. But I just, I just, I hear the, I feel the sweetness of not, just really not having to be this special, unique, you know, spiritual person on top of being a regular person. It's like this, you know, double-decker sandwich that I got to carry around and I'm, and it's, and it's getting stale.

And I, I, I don't know. I don't know if there's a question in there, but maybe you could, maybe you could speak, speak to that.

[Speaker 1] (8:09:06 - 8:09:06)

Thank you.

[Speaker 3] (8:09:07 - 8:09:08)

Yes. Okay. Thanks.

[Speaker 1] (8:09:12 - 8:10:07)

Well, you overdid it a little bit with your spiritual practice. And hence the reaction now, because you have to get back to some normality after all that specialness over that, both your spiritual practice, where you thought of yourself as special and your practice as special. You went quite far to an extreme and you're now experiencing the reaction to that extreme.

And that's good. In other words, you don't want to hear about anything spiritual anymore. I've had it, right?

So you overdid it. Now there's a reaction. Don't mention to me anything spiritual anymore, you say, but of course, you know, the famous expression, what is it?

The baby and the bath water. Don't throw out your baby with the bath water.

[Speaker 3] (8:10:07 - 8:10:08)

Well, it's like, it's all spiritual.

[Speaker 1] (8:10:09 - 8:10:10)

It's all spiritual.

[Speaker 3] (8:10:10 - 8:10:11)

That it's so separate.

[Speaker 1] (8:10:11 - 8:17:55)

So now first you went to that extreme. Now you go to an extreme of reaction and eventually end up in the middle where every moment is spiritual as it is. There's not nothing special.

Spirit is not separate from daily existence. So that's when we say spiritual, we're not referring to some realm out there that is to be achieved at some point where you become more special than you are now. It's not going to happen.

It's here and now. We're going deeper into the here and now. That's spiritual.

Now you are a little bit tired of these words because you went too far to that extreme. So you have to realize if you're a little bit perhaps like a Christian who was once very religious and suddenly got fed up, and then occasionally I have people in talks who are ex-Christians, and the moment I say, occasionally I say, Jesus said, they go, oh, don't talk to me about anything that's remotely Christian. I don't want to hear that.

I've had all that. So they don't realize because of that. Of course, they had a somewhat distorted view of what the whole thing was about.

So they didn't, but they can't stand the terms anymore. And that's fine. It's a phase.

You will come through that. Maybe it's happening already. It's the ordinariness.

Spiritual means the more spiritual you are, the more ordinary you are, the more non-special you are. And again, for the ego, that means, okay, I have to become more non-special. How do I become ordinary?

Okay, I need somebody to teach me to be ordinary. So I understand your dilemma, and perhaps you understand it also. And so this nothing special, chopping wood, carrying water, Zen defines spirituality, ultimately, what is the spiritual life, chopping wood, carrying water, which is the kind of thing you do in Zen monasteries.

Daily doing, in my case, it's buying some food in the store, going to have a cup of coffee, taking the dog for a walk in the forest, listening to the BBC World News, having a glass of wine occasionally with a meal, watching a movie, nothing extraordinary, and so quite an ordinary existence. And so it's hiding in there. The spirituality is in there.

It's not away from there, to just this. And so I'm sorry about these words that we use, but language is limited. So we have to use certain words.

And perhaps the emotion around these words, then eventually it's going to go and they become neutral again. And you can use them for what they are, which is simply useful pointers no more. Thank you.

Is proximity, this is Nancy from Florida, is proximity to someone who is in presence important or is listening to an awakened person on CD equally helpful? If the readiness is

there, I would say listening on CD can be equally helpful for those who are ready. And even a book can be equally helpful for those who are ready.

For others, the added presence of an actual physical presence of the teacher might sometimes break certain egoic resistances. But that's more the case in a disciple guru relationship. And so I'm not a guru as such, although some people would want me to be one.

A guru works closely together with disciples. And I did that for a little while, for a few years, and that was fine. But life has now called upon me to fulfill a different function.

And there's still a place for spiritual teachers who work with people more closely on a prolonged basis with disciples. Again, I could say a lot about that, the dangers involved and the possibilities involved in that. But I know that from correspondence I receive that many people's lives have changed from watching CDs or reading books.

Because when you recognize presence in another, that means there must be presence in you. So it's always in you when you recognize there's this great spiritual being there. How do you recognize it?

Through the very same consciousness in you. Because if it wasn't in you, you wouldn't recognize this. This person would look totally ordinary to you and say, I don't know what this fuss is all about.

And so there were always many people who never, you could, without that opening, you can live with the Buddha for 10 years, 20 years and say, he's just a completely ordinary person. And in a way he is. I mean, he's more ordinary than ordinary without an ego, that's true.

So when you recognize presence in another, at that moment, there is the presence in you. It's only presence can recognize presence. So it's always in you.

So whether you can recognize it when you see a CD, say, wow, where does that wow come from? The power, the aliveness that your mind is telling me is in that person there. No, it's in you.

So it's better not to project it and make a person special, which the mind tends to do. Well, the person is special, but so are you. You are equally special.

There's nobody closer to God than you are, to use that word, except that they may not know it. They may not know it. So when you recognize this, the wonderful thing is turn your attention within and say, where is the realization that this is a wonderful spiritual being talking right now?

How do I know that? Because you are a wonderful spiritual being, so to speak. You're not

a being, you are an expression of being, but the words are limiting.

[Speaker 2] (8:18:22 - 8:37:37)

I learned through my relationship with Eckhart that any and all my ideas I had about what a relationship should be, what my relationship should look like, and how I wanted my relationship to be, it took a lot of looking and some years where I finally realized that I wasn't having a real relationship. I was just having a relationship with an idea in my head. And I wasn't meeting the other and seeing the other as we can say as myself or the essence of the other, the essence of Eckhart.

But I just had all my expectations and ideas, my imagination, and that's how I was relating. And you could only see that in the daily activities, in your daily life. You could know this, and I knew it on some level that consciousness, that stillness was not about thought, it's not about your ideas, and you can know this, and in a relationship it's not about the idea of a relationship.

But that's when the awareness, the inner work, needs to be done. You have to take it beyond the intellectual and then actually then to discover it. So it's discovery becomes this inner deep knowing that okay what I see what I'm doing is that I'm not relating with another human being as consciousness, as stillness, but as ego.

So when I saw that, and it took many times seeing it, for example, we come from different cultures, Eckhart is from Germany, even though I'm born in Canada, I'm Chinese, so I had the cultural conditioning of Chinese. We bring to it our own conditioning, and plus being a woman, him a man, the idea, and all that sort of stuff, the era in which Eckhart was born, the generation in which I was born. So I have certain expectations that I brought to the relationship.

The first one I remember is very close to when Eckhart and I first got together in relationship, and I thought I had to do sort of all the cooking, you know, all the cleaning up afterwards, and that was my conditioning. And he didn't have to do anything, and I didn't realize that his conditioning also is that, because he was brought up in Europe, Germany, and in Spain, where he had his mother, his stepmother, who did everything. So it was easy for him just to, that was it, you just allow the woman to do it, at least this was my perception, because he was not doing too much, right?

So here I was, and then I was starting to get resentful, like, you know, here I am chopping the vegetables or whatever, or cleaning up, and I'm like, why doesn't he do anything? You know, he's got to do something, you know, like, why do I have to ask? I shouldn't have to ask.

And then suddenly I realized, oh my god, these are all my thoughts in my head, my expectations, instead of just telling him, you know, I don't want to do all the cooking, you

know? So I told him that, and he goes, oh, okay, well, you don't have to cook, we'll go out. I went, oh, okay, so we'll go out, all right.

I don't think at that time I didn't really say to him, well, just help me, you know, I just said, okay, yeah, okay, we'll go out, because I didn't really like cooking anyways, at least so I thought at that time. So we went out, and we went out a lot, and then plus we traveled, and we ate out again, so I was feeling more and more unhealthy. And anyways, when we bought a house together over in the island and had this wonderful big kitchen, I found myself cooking and able to, I liked cooking, I enjoyed it, and I wanted to, we wanted to be at home.

So we came back to the same scenario again, right? We weren't going out to the restaurants, and here I was cooking, but this time I was able to express, to say, you know, I would like some help, and he would go, okay. But then, you know, several weeks and months would pass, and I'd have to still keep on asking, well, I need some help now, and then I can say, just this thought arises in the background, like, oh my God, why is it that I always have to ask him?

It's just like a little kid, where I have to, you know, always have to ask a little kid what to do. Why can't he just offer and help? I went, wow, this is what I expect.

I expect him to just help, when his nature, his conditioning is that he just doesn't, unless he's asked. So I had to resign and just say, okay, I just have to ask, and it was me that was stirring up all the angst, all the anxiety, in the thought that I wanted him different than what he is. So, I don't mind now.

I just say, okay, time to help, and he'll go, okay, and he just, he'll help. So, I mean, those are just the superficial things in the relationship, the daily things, because many people ask me about what my relationship with Eckhart is like, and how wonderful it must be, and yes, on the level of silence, of stillness, it's absolutely wonderful. I feel like I'm right at home in stillness.

We don't have to say a word and can just sense the stillness, but we have the daily life, and this is where most of us can get caught up in, because you can meet somebody, and you have that wonderful spiritual connection, and you go, ah, this is wonderful, this is great, and some people are conscious of that spiritual connections, and other things that this is just, they don't know about the spiritual end of things, but they just, they just sense something, they just love this person, they want to be with this person, etc., until you live with them, and it is a working out, it is a giving space to allow them to have their conditioning, because that's, we all have it, but it's our own job to be aware of what our conditioning is, what our expectations are, and to hear the other, to, okay, what's their conditioning? It took several years before, Eckhart would never really ask me for anything, for example, I learned this when we were in Germany one time, and Eckhart wasn't there, he decided not to come for dinner, and we went with a group of people to

dinner, and one woman said, is your water no good? And I said, yes, it's fine, and then my friend who sat next to me, who is also German, said, she's really asking you for a sip of water, and I went, she asked me if my water was good, but she didn't ask me for a sip, no, that's how, that's how we ask, we don't ask directly, and I went, oh my gosh, Eckhart's been doing this to me for years, I thought, you mean he was really asking for a sip of my water, and I never knew it, so, and I went, okay, I understand, so, it is learning each other's own conditioning, and seeing how we apply our own conditioning, our own idea of how our relationship, or how communication should be, when the other has, you know, some other conditioning going on, some other way of being in this world, and relating how we relate, and this happens all around the world, and this is where miscommunication comes in, conflict comes in, because we have all these different ideas, but it's to see and to learn what those ideas, what the expectations, what that conditioning, what that culture is, is to learn it, and not demand that they change and be like yourself, so when I went back to the hotel, and I told Eckhart that, and he went, yeah, yeah, that's right, and then when I, it's interesting, because when I finally knew and understood what he wanted, he was then be able to, because I was able to communicate, maybe we just didn't know what was going on, I don't know what he thought, maybe he thought it was totally selfish, all this for many years or something, I don't know, but he was then able to now say, can I have a sip of your water? So it's giving each other that space just to be, and watching, learning, listening, to hear just exactly what it is that's being communicated, so it's beautiful that we have these two cultures, German and Chinese, which are very two strong different cultures, and just finding out about it, exploring, however the basis of our relationship, I think, would not have last, I probably would have walked out a long time ago, because I would have thought he was lazy, if I didn't have this understanding, and this primary importance of having God, consciousness, stillness, whatever you want to call it, in my life first, and having that be the holder, the container, of what the form, in this case, my form in relationship with Eckhart, is, that's the holder, and to realize that whatever form, and it's taken many years to realize that whatever form is going on, is not as important as the background, the stillness in which the form emerges, arises, and that's the beauty, and then when that stillness is there, then the things, the everyday life, yeah, there'll be ups and downs, it's not always great, and it's not always bad, it's, you know, sometimes we got to do things, but it's coming back, always, just to the present moment, to go beyond the conditioning, knowing that it's there, maybe even having the awareness that, yes, you have expectations, but then allowing the expectations to go, just let it go, and just see them as that, expectations, and just to live in that, in that stillness, and move, and breathe, and communicate from that place, and just allowing the nature of the other person just to be. I get a kick out of every time when we, because we live on Salt Spring, and we have this recycling thing going on, and we go to the recycling, and we have these containers of, you know, paper, plastic, etc, bottles, and so we have about six, seven containers, we load up in the truck, and we go, and Eckhart, by nature, is very, you know, just kind of slow, he just sort of casually, just sort of moves, and does it, and

I'm a little quicker, so we can go to the recycling, and here we're doing our jobs, and I realize, wow, I've done like five containers, and he's done two, and you know, it's like, okay, this is, it's okay, it's, it's fine, this is how he is, he just moves a little slower. I could create a story in my head about it, but I've accepted that, okay, he just, he's with me, and he's doing it, and it's enough, and if I want him to do more in me, less than, if I want him to do it in half, I could easily just hop in the car, and wait, and let him do his half, I suppose, but it's just easier just to, for me, just to do it, it's there, it's okay. So, every relationship goes through just that working out of how everyday life is going to emerge.

We have a unique circumstance, and I think we both really love it, and that is, we're fortunate enough to have three places. In Vancouver, we each have our own apartment, that is right across from each other, so we have our own space, and then we live part-time together on the island, and some people will think, wow, that's just so weird, and other people think, that's neat. I think for both of us, at least for me, I love it, I love having my own space.

So, you find a way to live together. Now, not everybody is going to be able to afford to have that amount of space, physical space, but it's a working out, it's finding the way, and we need to find that way, respect each other, be able to give that other person the space. I know, just on this awakening process, it requires a lot of space, at least it did for me, a lot of alone time to search, to look, to be where you can say, even in meditation, although I wasn't quite always sitting there in formal meditation, but just being aware, being able to see the mind working and operating, and how the thoughts just arise, and what kind of those thoughts are, and not, as what Eckhart says, taking your thoughts so seriously, to be able to just, ah, okay, it's not so important, all my ideas, opinions, expectations, it's not important, and in order to have what we can call a successful relationship, we need to each come to that place to realize, not intellectually, but really internally, inner knowing that, yes, the form of this moment is secondary, the primary importance is the space in which all communication, in which all love, presence, activity flows, and it's not so much a commitment to the other, but a commitment to your relationship with God, with stillness, and that's the true relationship, is stillness, is God-consciousness, and when you're truly committed to that, then life flows, and shit happens, and it will always happen, true life is now, it's not what happens,

[Speaker 4] (8:37:40 - 8:37:50)

it's the space in which it happens, and that's love.